

HOT POT;
OR
MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS.

Francis Francis

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HOT POT;

OR,

MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS.

BY

FRANCIS FRANCIS,

Author of "Sporting Sketches with Pen and Pencil," "A Book on Angling," "By Lake and River," &c.

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P R E F A C E.

H O T P O T.

MR. CODLIN drew his sleeve across his lips, and said in a murmuring voice, “What is it?”

“It’s a stew of tripe,” said the landlord, smacking his lips, “and cowheel,” smacking them again, “and bacon,” smacking them once more, “and steak,” smacking them for the fourth time, “and peas, cauliflowers, new potatoes, and sparrow grass all a-working up together in one delicious gravy.”—*Old Curiosity Shop.*

That is pretty much what “Hot Pot” is, only there is a little more of the solids and less of the gravy. It is a combination of various meats and vegetables—of various viands in fact,—and this book is a literary hot pot.

The reader will notice, perhaps, one or two allusions to matters which have possibly gone by. Several of the papers were written years ago, and in preparing them for this book it was not found that these passages could be excised profitably.

A U T H O R.

CONTENTS.

	<i>Page</i>
A CHRISTMAS REVERIE	1
THE FIRST DAY OF THE SEASON	11
A STRANGE FISHING MATCH	21
THE POACHER	36
THE BANKER	54
REMINISCENCES OF AN ANGLER, OR JUSTICES' JUSTICE	63
CHRISTMAS IN THE FISHERMAN'S SNUGGERY	73
ST. MAYFLY	84
CATCHING TARTARS	93
UNDER THE BOUGHS, "NOW AND THEN"	101
REMINISCENCES OF AN ANGLER: FARMER GUMSHUM	119
BANKERS AND TINKERS	129
THE PLEASURES OF GRAYLING FISHING	151
WILL WHISTLE	172
AN ANGLER'S CHRISTMAS YARN	186
REMINISCENCES OF AN ANGLER, "SQUARING THE KEEPER"	204

	<i>Page</i>
A WEEK ON THE BRATTLE	214
A STORM ON THE BRAWLE	236
WHITE TROUT AND SALMON FISHING IN GALWAY ...	246
REMINISCENCES OF AN ANGLER: ANGLER'S MISERIES	257
SAM COVENTRY	269
PISCATORY PROSING, "DE OMNIBUS REBUS," &c....	285
CHEWTON PIKE	301



A CHRISTMAS REVERIE.

Eheu fugaces, Posthume, Posthume,
Labuntur anni.—HORACE.

CHRISTMAS once more! How the years pass by, dropping one by one into the unchangeable past! How the illusions of youth are one by one dispelled! How what we then thought easy and practicable to realise becomes, as years roll onward, more and more difficult and delusive! Time was when I should have thought that a Christmas-day was all too short to become sated in upon turkey and sausage, mince pie and dessert. But now—well—well—the turkey has been eaten, the plum pudding reduced to a shapeless fragment, the nuts have been cracked, the oranges peeled, the Christmas games played, and stories told; and in the distance I can hear the sound of music, and of children laughing and dancing. The study fire gleams brightly; a special log has been saved for me; the kettle sings on the hob. My easy chair stands invitingly, and as I sink into it my favourite

pipe is at my elbow. Glancing round my study, my eye takes in all the familiar objects—the big Thames trout in his glass case, and who, thirty years ago, rewarded heaven knows how much patience by swallowing down a deftly spinning dace at Molesey Weir ; the pike's head giving forth a portentous “do,” caught by my poor old friend Frank Matthews, the actor. I had seven cases of fish around my room, all set up by Cooper. Their mouths were opened at various widths, and, as dear old Frank used to say, they reminded him of a singing class going through the scale—do, re, mi, fa, &c. ; the pike being do, and the trout fa, &c. There are my favourite old books, my invaluable friends ; there are rods, baskets, boots, nets, &c. My eye dwells kindly on them all as I fill my pipe and mix my punch, and then, satisfied that both are prepared to my taste, I fall back and calmly meditate.

Christmas again, eh ! What a many years of fishing I have done, and what a lot of waters I have fished ! Let me look back on them. North, south, east, and west, my first thought always is, wherever I go, “ What is the fishing like about here ? ” For it must indeed be a desert if I cannot find something to wave a rod over.

I care not a jot,
I envy no lot,
So I have a rod and can fish ;

and I am not very particular either—I can enjoy any kind of fishing, from the gudgeon to the salmon ; nothing is barren. Indeed, from the minnow to the whale, I might almost say, so that it is fishing, I can

manage to get along somehow. Of course there are those who favour all sorts of sports, and I have a fellow-feeling with them ; but after all there is nothing like fishing. I remember once being very hard set for it. I went to a place where there was said to be none, but after I had been there a week or so I found out a small pond, a very "wee" one indeed—it was not twenty yards across, and there was nothing in it but a few very small eels, and some very small Prussian carp. Never mind, they were fish, and I fished for them. I expect there might have been some three or four dozen in the pond, and I caught them all the first day, and turned them back into the water again, as they were of no use. The next day I caught only about four or five, for they had become very shy ; and after that not a nibble could I get, fish I never so feately.

Piscator nascitur, non fit. I was born one, I believe ; one thing is certain, that, so far as I was concerned, my pastors and masters didn't spare the rod and perhaps that may have made me familiar at least with one sort. I always had a desperate love for fishing, even before I had the opportunity of using a rod in any fashion myself. My first edition of Izaak Walton, how well do I remember it ! It was Moses Browne's. How I recall to this hour that contemplative gentleman, in a three-cornered cocked hat and silk stockings, sitting in front of a cave with a ten foot mountain at his back, on the top of which goats are depicted, also contemplating. His rod—which according to the exigencies of perspective must needs be about forty or fifty yards long at the very least—

lies at his feet, fishing, or rather contemplating the act, on its own account ; for a curious beast with a club tail like a beaver, but supposed, I imagine, to be an otter, is making off through the flags on the other side of the river, which is not favourable to sport. Truly a wonderful picture ! And how I devoured the history of the catching of the big chub with the white spot on his tail, and the conversation of Piscator and Venator. How I revelled in it ! It was what Bulwer would term the threshold of the “ unknown ” to me—mysterious, dim, entrancing ! Ay, ay, that was many a long year since, before my hand had learnt its cunning, and when the fishes *bewore* not of me, or, as Ovid used to say,

Nec sua credulitas piscem
Suspenderat hamo.

My first rod—ah ! That *was* an event ! It was a three-joint bamboo thing, without a reel, and my first essay at fishing with it was off a place we used to call “ Crab Quay,” just under Pendennis Castle, in Falmouth harbour. Here, with a cork float and a rag worm on the hook, I caught a noble wrasse (raft we called them there) of nigh 6in. long. That was my first fish, and was very nearly being my last, for I was so proud of it that I insisted on having it cooked, and in trying to eat it one of the bones stuck in my throat and defied all sorts of efforts to dislodge it ; I was rapidly growing purple in the violent coughing it caused, when my mother put her finger down my throat as a desperate remedy, and either pushed it down or pulled it up, I forgot which.

After catching all sorts of sea fish, chiefly pollack, wrasse, father lashers, blennies, smelts and congers, I took to trout fishing in the little becks that run about in all directions out on the moors north and westward of Penrhyn. I soon learnt how to toss the little speckled beauties out on the banks, and how to guide my worm between the stones and under roots, and how to tell a bite from a mere hitch up. And famous bags we often made, too—from four or five to seven or eight dozen ; and I have taken over ten dozen in a day. To be sure they were small ; it was a whopper that ran four to the pound ; and I never did see but one half pounder. But it was very pleasant wandering away out on the moors, amidst huge eternal granite rocks and boulders, with fringing heather and yellow gorse, and no sound but nature, save perhaps the faint and far-off chink of some stone dresser's pick as he trimmed the wide blocks of stone to be shipped at Penrhyn, and sent to all parts of the kingdom. The College brook, which runs into the Penrhyn creek at Penrhyn, was a great favourite of mine. I wonder how many hundreds, or I might almost say thousands, of times, I have dreamt of that brook since. It is nearly forty years since I fished it, and yet only last week I fished it over again in my dreams, and every stone and hole and favourite bend was as patent and clear before me as it was the first day I wandered on its banks.

It was at Truro I got my first fly rod. I had learnt to use one from a friend, and I first exercised it out on Daubuz's moors, where sundry rather more pretentious brooks meandered, and on which one could

just get a fly and no more ; but even then the red hackle and black gnat were the Alpha and Omega of my *répertoire*. Soon, however, I got back to Hampshire, and the Titchfield river opened on me—this stream was once favoured by dear old Izaak Walton. I can see his lofty steeple-crowned hat bedecked with collars and flies, wandering along under the shades of grey old Place House—then a mansion of pretension, but now, alas ! a mere jackdawery, with huge walnut trees growing in its chief apartments. I can see him peering at that pound trout one never could catch under Stoney Bridge ; it always was there, for certain. I can hear him thus discourse Venator : “Mark you now, yonder lieth a lusty trout ; I will essay my skill on him ; see how the greedy glutton seizeth on the weak and unresisting, and feedeth fat his ravenous maw, while I, dropping my worm into the stream, do execute upon him justice for all his crimes. Have at you, sir trout ! So now the landing net, scholar,” &c. I will say that for Izaak—he always does put himself and all of us in the right. Even when you are sticking a live frog you are “treating him as if you loved him ;” there is, of course, “much virtue in an if.” Thence all the loving and lovable mysteries of Hampshire water meadows, crystal streams, glorious ripples, unparalleled shallows, golden gravel, swaying weeds, soft green rushes, grey pollards, innumerable picturesque old sluices, and noble trout and grayling, became unfolded to me, and I fished some of the finest streams in England with more or less success ; many a time from three or four to eight or nine brace of very fine trout filled my creel, while I picked up fresh.

angling lore and fresh skill. But yet I panted for pastures new, and fresh fields, for my ambition was to master every style of fishing and catch every kind of fish the kingdom boasted of.

In time I came to London, for the first time on the coach, with my old friend Faulkner driving, and well do I remember my first glimpse of the Thames at Kingston, and the punts thereon (for there were many fishing then), and one old gentleman—I can see him now—as we passed, suddenly caught up a ledger rod, lying at his side, and, with a desperate whang, hit, I suppose, a barbel, and as we turned the corner out of sight his rod was bent double on a good fish. I resolved ere very long to taste that pleasure myself; and well do I remember my first day on the Thames. It was at Richmond, in very hot and bright August weather, but the fish bit well, and I remember that the boatman did not seem to think our take anything very out-of-the-way, though we caught thirty dozen of roach and dace and sixteen barbel, up to three or four pounds each, and filled a good-sized hamper with something like 100lb. of fish. From that time I fished the Thames from end to end; and how I loved it, and do still, though with a chastened affection. Many a time would I start off at twelve o'clock at night from Chelsea, where I abode, and, lighting my pipe, walk off all alone, with only the nightingale, the night wind, and the stars for company, across Wimbledon Common, through Kingston, and away to Molesey, to knock up old Bill Wisdom, boil a cup of coffee, and then up to the roaring, flashing weir in the grey of the morning for a long day's fishing.

Those were the days ; ay, those were the happy days, my masters !

“Laudator temporis acti,” says the youthful cynic of the present date. Devoutly do I hope that you may have as good cause hereafter, my young friend.

Thank God for making me a fisherman ; for, in the fast life we young men led in my young days, it was the only thing that tore me away from the reek and filth of town, and put new life and vigour in me ; and much indeed do I owe to it. Cultivate it, cultivate it, my young friend ; there is much health and purity in it, both for mind and body. And what delicious repose there used to be when we could get into some warm sunny swim under the willows, where few or none came to interrupt or chaff us, and one got just sport enough to keep interest aroused, but not enough to destroy one’s enjoyment in the contemplation of the river and its glorious setting—a jewel set in banks of natural enamel, more varied, cunning, and beauteous than skill of any mortal goldsmith could reproduce. Now, alas ! the river is so thronged with boats that much of this delight is gone, perished—sunk into a mere memory in fact ; and if one would not desire to be sat upon, one has to cultivate assiduously the humour of a Hansom cabby to rebut the jibes and jeers flung at the patient angler a-watching of his quill.

That pragmatical old pagan, Dr. Johnson, has much to answer for in that epigram of his in this respect. Indeed he has provoked fully as much invective on the river as ever the citation of the “puppy pie” did. By the way what a capital idea that was of the Frenchmen showing off their English slang at the regatta on the

Seine. Imagine with what delight Jones of Trinity, the most fluent chaffer of the bargees on the river, heard Jules address his friend, *Ha, ha ! qui a mangé le pâté de poupée ce matin, m'n enfant ? Ha, ha !* utterly oblivious of the fact that there was no peg to hang the joke upon. Though our friend, the bargee, is not always to be chaffed with impunity. Witness that capital tale of the bargee who came dripping wet and cold as charity into a lock house to warm himself, while his boat was locked, and there found five or six Eton lads surrounding the cheerful blaze, and made some remark in which, as it commonly does, Hades by its popular name figured conspicuously. "And how is it down there, bargee ?" asked a cheeky young aristocrat. "Why, pretty much as it is here," said the bargee ; "all the swells next the fire." They made way for him after that. But in spite of all that has been said, I do not think sport on the Thames is anything now like what it used to be. The river is too much canalised, and I would almost as soon as not have all the old netting back again, if we had the same holes and banks, and the same water and stocks of fish. When shall I ever catch twenty-two pike in two days out of one weir, as I did the first time I ever caught a pike at Molesey ? or when shall I take above a hundred in one season out of one hole, as I did out of the tumbling bay hard by ? Never ! As for barbel, bream, chub, and roach, I have seen and taken a hundred-weight of them in a day over and over again ; and as for trout, I once knew old Bill Wisdom to catch thirty-five in one season at and about Hampton Court alone. There are not as many caught in the whole river now.

Ay, times are changed, and the river is changed. No doubt of it.

And so my mind travels on to the first salmon, when I voyaged away to the far, far north, full thirty years ago, to effect his capture ; and what a gorgeous, what a super-splendacious creation he was when I did catch him ! He was but a middling fish of 10lb. or so, but he was a salmon, the king of fish ; he had made the reel sing, and for the time he was a sort of Dagon—a fish deity—and I worshipped him accordingly. Since that hour what tons of his tribe I have slaughtered ; what rocky, rushing torrents I have waded ; what stormy lakes have I not tossed upon the bosom of—happy if only one run rewarded all my patience, skill, and labour ; and with what gorgeous scenery around—what mountains, forests, rocks, and waterfalls ! One may think what one likes, but there is nothing like salmon fishing after all—nothing. Featly as one has to deal with a wary trout, and carefully as one has to watch the grayling rise, there is nought in nature like the glorious upward surge of the silver monarch of the river. With what energy, what resistless force, deep struck, he rushes——

“ Please, sir, missus says, shall she send you in a cup of tea, or will you come into the drawing room and take it ? ”

THE FIRST DAY OF THE SEASON.

Solvitur acris hyems gratâ vice veris et Favoni.—HORACE.

THE above quotation has been made before, I am aware, but never was it so particularly apt as at present. By the way, a very witty friend of mine, when Favonius, who was the property of Baron Rothschild, won the Derby, made a remarkably clever translation of that line. Had it been made by Canning or Mr. Lowe, or any other great man known to fame as a Horatian critic or a Latin punster, it would have been preserved like “Ex luce lucellum,” or “The Needy Knife-grinder,” or any other clever hit. He said that Horace had foretold the victory of Favonius, and that the line I have quoted was his Derby Tip; and thus he rendered it—

Now all the sharp Hyams are made very solvent
By the grateful spring of Favonius.

That strikes me as not bad for these degenerate days, when Horace is out of favour, and seldom finds place in the competition-wallah.

What a winter has been here! Anglers who have disbursed many of those magic leaves issued by the Bank of England, and which constitute so large a

portion of the current literature of the day, in the hire of expensive spring salmon fisheries, have indeed had an awful time of it. Day after day, and week after week, have they seen the river a turbid torrent, rushing by many feet above fishing level, while storm, hail, sleet, rain, and heavy falls of snow have followed each other for months, almost without intermission ; and in hundreds of instances has the salmon rod stood idle, while Donald or Mick have stood idle too at the lodge door, wondering what day next week or the week after, *if there was no more* rain or snow, "she" would be fit to put a fly on, while "the masther" sat within over the dubbing table, tying huge gaudy spring flies, twice the usual size (and which were never fated to be used), so as to be in a condition to take advantage of the first day or two's lull which fate and elements might see proper to send them. Alack ! but a "beggarly array of empty boxes" is likely to prevail, awaiting those salmon promised to Tom, Dick and Harry down south, and for which the direction cards need never be written. Heigh-ho ! the patient angler needs all his patience this season. A hundred pounds, perhaps two or more, pitched into that turbid flood, and a month wearily, woefully wasted in a dull moorland or mountain country, where the mist is always three-parts down the mountain, and where "the rain it raineth every day !" Here I mind me of another apt quotation, this time not from Horace, but from a more modern and less classical source, since it comes from the columns of *Bell's Life*. In the far-off days of my youth—and I am sorry to say they are farther off than I like to contemplate—when we had no *Field*

no *Sporting Lives*, no *Land and Waters*, no *Pink 'un*, no nothing but *Bell's Life* and “*Boxiana*,” there existed a curious thing called “*Bell's Gallery of Comicalities*”—no one of less age than a good solid half-century knows anything of it nowadays. This consisted of a series of humorous cuts of a sporting or popular nature, with explanatory verses attached, and which were inserted in the top right-hand corner of the paper. They were not brilliant specimens of high art, I admit ; yet, strange as it may sound, here my poor old acquaintance (for I am proud of the acquaintance) John Leech first “fleshed his maiden sword,” or rather pencil. One of these cuts appeared every week, and once a year they were collected into a broad sheet and became the “*Gallery*” aforesaid. Several of these still dwell in my memory ; among them was one of a cockney sportsman (the cockney sportsman was a great institution in those days—thanks be, he is dead and buried and out of print this long while ; though, in some exceedingly Bœotian parts of the country they believe in him still, like witchcraft and fortune-telling). This particular one, however, was walking over the moors in a pitiless rain with his dogs, drenched to the bone almost. He meets a native, and inquires where he can get shelter and “mountain dew,” and the applicable verse runs thus :

Say, laddie, does it always rain
In this here dismal spot ?
My question I repeat again.
Why does the blockhead pause ?
“Naw, sir, it dinna always rain,
It very often snaws.”

And such, truly, has been the state of things, and this pleasing alternation has the unfortunate piscator undergone for the said month, with little prospect of amendment, and not a fin to show for all his outlay. Such is the luck of fishing many a time and oft ; and who will be disposed to grudge the patient being those few glimpses of sunshine and sport which are such angels' visits to the angler ? But if the salmon angler has had a hard time of it, the trout fisher has been even in worse case. You can, if the water be not many shades too thick or high, contrive to hurl half an ounce of iron, tinsel, and feathers to its destination even in a pretty tidy hurricane, and chance to get "an offer." But an olive dun or a small March brown at the end of a 12ft. rod and a gossamer line is the most hopeless thing I know of, and the unhappy trout fisher has wandered on the banks of his river day after day, like Orpheus on the banks of Styx, despairing.

But, come ! at length brighter suns are around us ; and, so that it only sleets or snows one-half the day, if the sun glints out now and then, and the wind is moderate for the other half, there is no need to despair ; no, not a bit it.

Why, anglers, why, should we be melancholy, boys ?

On with the boots, and up with the olive ! 'tis a colour of good omen, and was grateful even to Father Noah, when the water was getting in order there too. So let's away down to the river. " Spring, spring, bee-youtiful spring !" lambkins ski-ip, and birds do si-ing ; trout are leaping too, odd rat 'em ! just let

'em leap when I get at 'em. Why, what is this? I am, in sheer exuberance of spirits at the first day's fishing, like Miss Monflathers in "The Old Curiosity Shop," "improvising in the most brilliant manner"—and verse, too, as I live! and not even blank verse. What's come to me? I'd nothing but tea for breakfast; no qualifier—for, as Mrs. Brown says at the play (though she would'nt have said it of that), "I don't 'old with it;" not even a glass of ale before I came out. It is the mere sight of the water, I suppose, that kindles this glow—this flow of spirits. There's a sentiment, and an instance too, for Sir Wilfred. He too, has, I observe, a great flow of spirits; but they are natural, I believe, and not ardent—nothing contraband about them; and, in my delight at being once more by the river side, I burst out a-singing Mendelssohn's beautiful "Spring cometh hither." I don't do it very well, I admit, because it is written for a high soprano, and I am a low baritone, and the runs are, not to put too fine a point upon it, rusty. Fortunately, there are no critics handy but the thrushes, and they seem rather incited to rivalry, and sing louder than ever. How I wish I could sing like a thrush, or had the art of poor old dead-and-gone Von Joel! wouldn't I out-trill you and double-double you, my pretty little chirruper, as you sit in the old pollard there, whistling lays to your lady love or jigs to a milestone. Hallo! what was that? "Plop." "Hurrah! there's a trout rising somewhere." Fortunately, the rod is up by this time, and it is only a question of what fly to put up, an olive or a March brown. There he is again—"Ha, ah! I see the

spotted quarry, and cunningly placed too—under the bank yonder, where the dock leaf hangs over. That'll do. Olive duns, plenty of 'em too, are coming down—now sailing proudly on, now blown flat on the water. “Plop.” “What, you will have it; you can't be quiet?” “Plop.” “Ah, I'll plop you in about the twinkling of a bed post!” (By the way, why should a bed post twinkle, and how does it contrive to do it? Either the post must be loose, or the observer what is called *tight*.) And now we're ready, for the first cast of the season. Ah! that was short, but the fish keeps rising still; evidently the long fast of winter has sharpened his appetite, and he is making up for lost time. “So! that is better!” as the fly falls, not exactly like thistledown, because it is not like thistle-down in any way, but lightly enough for all purposes. It floats past the leaf neatly; there is a pretty little curl in the water; and “chuck!”—my pretty chuck, my dove, my duck—I have him. Hallo! What gone? Never! But he is, and the fly with him. In my haste I had picked one out of an old, old batch, which has for my sins been in my book far, far too long. The gut is as dry as a chip and as brittle as straw, and my first fish has made his bow, and learnt that some olives are pickled or particularly piquant. But there is better luck in store, and, fortunately, better flies too. On with another; we haven't to go far to find another rising fish; and he, with that confidingness which is so delightful in the early spring, comes at once without any hesitation, and dies the death like a decent, well-conducted *Salmo fario*, and will add a pound weight to my basket; so cover him up with

rushes, and scatter daisies and buttercups on his coffin, and sing his requiem.

When daisies pied and violets blue,
And lady smocks all silver white,
And cuckoo buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight—

though it is hardly the time for cuckoo buds as yet. But haply in a few short weeks, on some peaceful noon-tide when the sun is warm and the river eddies along, cool and pleasant to look at, at our feet, and the smoke from our old and constant friend eddies up among the overhanging foliage with scarce a break, the faint, far-off, musical notes will come to us for the first time over the woodlands — “Cuckoo, cuckoo, summer’s coming, summer’s coming !” and once more, too, we shall hear the nightingale, with heavenly note, in every shaw and thicket, as we plod home with a heavy creel in the dusk. What a lovely world it is ! and who enjoys it like the fisherman ? But this is musing, not fishing. I wonder whether that old three-pounder still lies under the pollard stump in Bates’s Corner; and, in the pursuit of knowledge, we walk up the bank some sixty yards or so, to where the grey riven old stump overhangs the water. There is a well-known shallow just above that stump, in which my old friend used to be cock of the walk, and bullied every other fish within sixty yards. It was a sight to see the big fish sail up, like a full-blown colonel, to some pet eddy where flies perpetually plied for hire, and to see with what an air he took possession ; while the major, a two-pounder, who had just before chased the senior captain (a pound-and-a-half), in like manner made

a dash into the nearest weed with most amusing alacrity. And then how he would feed ! as if it was rather a favour to the flies than otherwise. Ay, ay ; but is he there now ? that is the question. Yes. There, sure enough, *is* a fish feeding, and a good one. If it should be my old friend, I hope at this early season to avenge me of many a slight and many a cut direct inflicted on me in the summer past by yonder spotted caitiff. So, sir, come on. Let us essay the task :

Give us to know if thou be living yet—
If all thy panoply of gold and ruby drops
Gleams but to mock the angler's skilful toil.

Twice the fly falls unnoticed, but the third time it is taken, and the foe is fast. He makes but a middling fight, however, and, big as he is, I can see ere the net holds him that he is black and lanky, and a very different fish from what he was when I first tempted him. Starved as he is, he yet dislikes his doom, and seems to beg another term of life.

Art thou so bare and full of wretchedness,
And fearest to die ? Famine is in thy cheeks.

Yet why should I be pitiless, when fate
May some day chance to hold me in like strait ?

It were foul scorn to bag so poor a fish ; another month or so, and you may catch him if you can—the match was not a fair one. So, carefully disengaging the hook, I slide him gently once more into the stream, and I hope he may give me another chance when he is better worth. Ha ! Three times has that fish

risen near the mouth of yon carrier, and three times have I put the fly neatly and workmanlike over him in vain. Something is amiss here. What has destroyed his confidence ? Ho, ho ! of course I see, and I should have seen before. The March brown is on. There goes a fine fat fellow, and there another, and my friend on the other side has taken him just after my olive dun had passed over him unnoticed. So, so ! out with the book, and lo now, there is a bunch of beauties ! That is about the colour ! Straighten the gut and loop him on ; and off he goes, resting on the surface of the water, and looking as like the others as feathers can look. Now comes the crucial test, and there, obedient to the invitation, is the magic ring ; and it is

“A knell
That summons us to Heaven or to Hell”—

A ring that shall bind us together for better or worse, and death won't part us. So, so ! a lusty chap for the season, but neither running nor leaping will avail him more. *Par ici, monsieur ! Hierher, mein Freund !* and there he is, the best trout yet—quite a good colour, and well made up, and an honest pound and a half. Evoe Bacche ! we will wet that fellow. Lay him on the grass—though little time can be given to contemplation, for the glimpse of sun has brought out the March browns in hundreds, and they fairly speckle the stream, and how the trout are rising, to be sure ! As I stand here I can count twenty fish in little more than as many yards, and some of them must surely pay “the lawing.” A busy twenty minutes follows, and then the rise is over, but not for long. I shall just

have time to eat that cold mutton chop I confiscated at breakfast, to wash it down with the “modicis Sabinum.” For “mea nec Falernæ neque Formianum pocula colles.” The Sabine who made this was known as Johannes Longum. Here’s success to his manes ! Ha ! there they are again ; the fish will keep on persisting in trying, like Caggs in the song, to “astonish the Browns” (March browns), but always end by astonishing themselves. Thus the day wears on, with varying success, till the afternoon gives out, and by five o’clock you would not think there was a trout in the stream ; so I turn me homewards, with a six and a half brace of good ones in my creel, tired and happy, and wondering what mine host will have provided me for dinner, at which not many things will come amiss—whereas in town, now, I should scan the bill of fare curiously and critically, and Frank, of Simpson’s, would have none such a time of it to get me comfortably and satisfactorily fed. Then a pipe and a chat with my excellent landlord, a glass of the Sabine aforesaid, and early to roost, and so ends the first day of the season.

A STRANGE FISHING MATCH.

No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.—*Richard III.*

CHRISTMAS is a very jolly time for folks who have their families and friends about them, provided they are pretty well to do, and the Christmas bills don't weigh too heavily on their minds. But there are a good many in this big Babylon of a metropolis who have neither families nor friends to ask them to lively Christmas dinners, with dances and forfeits and romps under the mistletoe afterwards ; and to them the choice between a dreary lodging and a public-house parlour is the only choice left. Christmas, as a rule, is not much of a time for fishing, or one could easily make a pleasant day out of it ; still I have known a Christmas or two when we have spent a happy, thankful day on some river bank too.

Twenty-five years ago I was not the man I am now ; I am now a master in a good way of business, but in those days I was only a poor apprentice. My friends lived 200 miles from London, down in the north, and I knew hardly anyone in town, so my Christmases were sad and solitary enough as a rule. One comfort to me was that I was fond of fishing, and in my fishing rambles I had picked up an acquaintance with an odd

old fellow by the name of Harris—Ben Harris—Uncle Ben we used to call him. I never could make out what he was, or quite where he lived. He used the same parlour that I did of an evening, and, from seeing him smoking his pipe nightly at the Don Saltero's—the old Don's, the coffee-house at Cheyne-walk, Chelsea—I got to know him, though we seldom spoke much. But we happened once or twice to meet out fishing on the Lea, and then we struck up an acquaintance which became closer and closer, so that we used to fish in all the waters round London in company, spending many a happy day together. Uncle Ben had no more ties than I had, and his out-goings and in-comings were a perfect matter of indifference to anyone but himself. We spent one or two Christmas-days on the banks of our favourite stream, with little to mark them out from any other day, and no great sport; but I remember one that made an impression on me at the time, and it may please you if I relate what occurred then.

I forgot to say that my name is Woffles ; and if you should pass along the King's-road, just beyond Smith-street, on the right-hand side, you'll see the name of Woffles ; and, if you or your good lady like to step in, why, our Two-and-three for families is greatly admired ; and if you'll take home a pound of it, Woffles—that's me—will be pretty sure to have your custom again. But this is in the present—I am going to speak of the past, perhaps twenty years past.

Well, Uncle Ben and I were going up the Lea to spend our Christmas-day in a quiet bit of fishing, at a favourite hole we knew of, and where we expected

a good take of fish ; and we weren't mistaken. Christmas-eve had been foggy, and Christmas-day opened with rather a grey and lowering sky ominous of snow ; but, as long as the fish bit pretty well, that we did not care much about. Our station was pitched under an old alder tree that spread over and overhung the bank, some fifty yards above the junction of the old river with a cut used by the barges. Just below this junction there was a sort of side pound, in which the barges rested at times ; there was one in it while we fished. Under our alder there was a long deep hole, the deepest in the river for a mile or two, and here certainly the big roach had congregated, and, as we kept well out of sight, our long rods had pretty constant application. A handful of pollard and coarse rice was our only groundbait, and that we used sparingly ; but from about ten in the morning to one o'clock the fish came up uncommonly well—I never knew them come to hook better—and hardly one of them was under half a pound, and many were over a pound.

“ What a day this is ! ” said Uncle Ben ; “ Ain’t it ‘eavenly ! I never remember such a day’s sport as this since the big floods in 18—, when the roach all came up out of that old hunks Squire Toggle’s water on the Colne into the deep ditch on Farmer Toogood’s meadow. Toogood’s a sort of connection o’ mine, and I got leave off him to try the ditch ; for, happenin’ to be passing by, I see a good fish or two on the move in the ditch over the hedge, and thought something was to be done. And, mind you, I did just about make ’em stand and pay that day ; four stone and a

half, 63lb., of regular thumpers (just like these) did I walk off with—how my back ached before I got 'em home. There's another; there he is agen; Ha! would you? I've got him. Hullo! What's this? The stock-dolager! Hooray!—a pound and a halfer!—no, a two pounder, and no mistake! Take care. That's it! now the net—ge-e-ently does it—ah, and a two-pounder he is, and will gain the prize at the club for all the year, and the great 2lb. roach prize too. He's a real stuffer I tell you—oh, isn't he a beauty?" And so he was—so he was—*just half an ounce short of two pound*, if it came to a very close thing; but then "*he wasted that between the river and Don Saltero's.*" It was the last we caught, for the sky clouded over suddenly, the sun went in, and the snow came down heavily.

"Well, it's about dinner time," said Uncle Ben; "we'll light our fire and cook up, and by the time we've done that and smoked a pipe the snow 'll pr'aps be over again. There's a likely place in the bank of the hedge, down about opposite the pound, which is out of the wind, I observed coming along; so collar a armful or two of this dead wood out o' the alder, and some of these dry branches, and come along."

And loading ourselves with the requisite fuel, we went down to the spot indicated, and Uncle Ben began to make the fire, while I cleaned a few of the fish and made ready the little portable frying-pan, which was always the inseparable companion of our rambles. The fish were cleaned and ready; the bacon, with which they were to be supplemented, was laid out in beautiful streaky rashers; but the fire was not ready.

The big umbrella was set up, like a tent, but the snow by this time eddied down so furiously and thickly that lighting a fire was no easy work; once or twice it began to burn, but a gust of wind and a sheet of snow ended its frail life in smoke and blackness.

"Bless my heart!" said uncle Ben, as this happened for the third time, "what's to be done now?"

"Hy!" We looked round, and a pair of eyes, with a red nightcap above them, peered at us above the cuddy of the before-mentioned barge, which lay by the bank of the river not fifty yards from us. "Hy! wot, wunt un kindle?" said the voice gruffly.

"Not a blarmed bit," answered Uncle Ben.

"Well, see here," and a big, red shining nose rose into view; "here's a fire 'ere, and I 'spect its more warmer and more comfable too for a Crismus harternoon nor that ere haggard side."

"Well, mate, if you mean that," said Uncle Ben, "why we'll come aboard an' cook our vittles, and pr'aps you'd jine us, and thank ye kindly."

"Come aboord bo, ye're 'eartily welcome. It's nobbut a scant place, but's sheltersome, and a snaw storm *es* a snaw storm;" and a pleasant-looking mouth and chin made its appearance to second the invite. The man was a bargee, but a decent one, much less brutal and coarse-tongued than the generality of his class. No second invite was needed; we carried our impedimenta with us, stepped up the plank which our new friend shoved out to the bank for us, and entered the cuddy of the barge. It was the snuggest and warmest little crib possible. In one corner a small open stove burnt brightly, and a comfortable

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No, no, not a bit on it ; and 'eads it were and is, and no mistake. I don't care nowt o'er-much for publics, I've a-seed a mort o' misery come o' drinkin', I 'ave, and never could abide em sin poor Bill Belcher's job."

" And what was Bill Belcher's job, if I may make so bold ?" I asked, ready to pick up any stray story or experience.

" Well, ye see, Crismas arternoon's a kinder sorter time for stories, and, though I never tould of this 'un since, yet I don't mind now tellin' it to you ; but it's a dolesomish one, so first let's fill the jug again, and take another heart-warmer." We did so, and then settled ourselves for a comfortable yarn. The jug was replenished, pipes recharged, and thus our host :

" As I said, I have seen a deal o' misery come out o' drinkin', aye, and out of poachin' too. We bargees mostly carries a net with us to do a bit o' poachin' when convenient, but I never liked it over much. I am fond of anglers, and don't like to spile their sport for the sake o' a pint o' beer, and many a time have I saved some favourite hole and pitch o' the poor folk from bein' scraped out and their hard-earned pleasure destroyed." Uncle Ben here solemnly shook hands with the speaker, who really seemed quite grateful for the compliment, and continued : " But of all the drinkers and poachers ever I see, Bill Belcher was the most desprit. He'd be up to his neck in water a-poachin' some pond or preserve arf the night, and then go 'n' drink hisself mad drunk in t'other arf. I always thought he was three parts out o' his mind when he got one o' these fits on. But Bill somehows at last fell in love, d'ye see, with the lock-keeper's

da'ter up above, and then he pulled up and was quite a réformed karakter wos Bill, and for a long time, a year or more, his wife and he was quite a pattern o' conical (*query*, conjugal) bliss. He got on at that time to be cap'n o' a barge, which was named after 'em. This is the werry 'dental—the William an' Mary, Potts o' Stortford owner—and Bill, really a clever civil chap when the drink warn't about him, stood in 'igh favour. Well, in course, arter they married she came aboard the barge—not as a barge, mind you, is a good school for women, it aint. No, took away from other fimmles, they somehow gets 'ard and brute-like, and offen wus nor the men, and sometimes takes to drink quite terrible. And, mind you, wen a woman once does take to drink there's an end of *her*, and so it was in the end with *she*; for arter a time Bill he got tired o' steadiness and took to the old work agin, and arter another turn, and a good long turn too, a-tryin' all she could to change him back agen, she gradiwally bit by bit took to 'is example, d'ye see. Well things went on wuss and wuss, and Bill got notice that if he didn't mend—for he offen néglécited bizziness when in his cups, and that won't do neither in boats nor barges—that he'd be reedooced from bein' cap'n; and stead of this menden him, it made him more worser, and they two took to quarrellin' shockin' over their liquor, and more nor one black eye I've seen her 'ave to her share. Howsomever, they got on from bad to wuss, and their quarrels was quite dreadful. I often thought they'd 'a done one another a mischief, for when she was rael roused she was for all the world like a mad cat. One

night we was a layin' in this 'ere werry pound, and me and my mate was away to the Bargeman to spend the evenin'. Bill and his wife was 'well on' when we left, and was a quarrellin' like bricks, so that we was glad to be out on it, mind you. Well we spent our evenin' and come 'ome to the barge about midnit, 'avin' to start at day-break. There wornt no one wissible. They was asleep in the fore cuddy, we s'posed, so we didn't waken 'em, but made us snug aft. The next mornin' we turned out earlyish, and there sat Bill at the bows a-starin' dull into the water. He didn't speak at first, but looked round dazed-like, till we begun a-askin' 'bout breakfust; for we see—as there warn't no smoke from the cuddy funnel—that the fire warn't lighted yet. So, says we, 'where's Mary, Bill? and why aint the fire alight?' So then he turns round and looks at us, and we noticed that his face was werry pale and scratched, and he looks all abroad-like; but then that warn't much of a novelty, ye see, for she was werry 'andy with her *ten commandments*, and he seemed 'ardly sober now. 'Oh,' says he, sullen-like, 'she took the huff last night arter you went, and wouldn't stop along o' me no longer, so she's gone 'ome to her friends for a spell.' She'd a-threatened to do this often, so we warn't none surprised, and made shift to get our breakfast as best we mought. Well, we finished our trip, but Bill he was a altered man somehow—werry altered. Not but what he drinked wusser than ever; indeed, he was seldom off o' the liquor now. In course o' time we come back, and laid up at the pound again. Bill he worn't for layin' up at

the pound ; he was in a great 'urry ; he wanted to get on, and seemed desprit fixed on it ; but the water above had been shut off to repair the lock, and we couldn't go on till midday next day, so there was nothin' for it but to stay where we was. Then Bill shuts hisself up in the cuddy, and takes to drinkin' agin.

"There was a great fishin' match next day—full fifty jolly anglers all of a row. They stretched from the alder, where you was a-fishin', down to the deep hole near the stank half a mile below. They was ranged out in stations, and two or three coves walked up and down while they was a-fishin' to see fair play ; and me and my mate, 'avin' nothin' to do, walked up and down too, a-watchin' the sport. At last we come to the end o' the line, where there was a oldish cove a fishin' in the stank hole. As we come up with one o' the secketarys, the old 'un says, says he, 'Mr. Secketary, this 'ere ain't a fair match.' 'Wot's wrong ?' says the secketary. 'Wot's wrong ! Why it's all wrong. Some one's been a'-puttin' a hobstruction in my swim in order to beat me, and I've lost three good 'ooks in it and never caught a fish,' says he. 'I've fished the stank hole for years,' says he, 'and never knowed it so afore—there was always plenty of fish in it, and no hobstructions,' says he. 'It's a put-up thing, and a regler swindle. I knows who done it,' says he, 'it's Billy Parker, for he's always jealous o' me. There ! damme, if I ain't fast in it again !' And so he was, fast as fast.

"'Werry odd,' says the secketary ; 'it can't be wot you s'poses, because, as the swims was chose by lot, and

Billy Parker couldn't 'a know'd who'd have the swim, it might 'a bin Billy hisself. Let's see,' and he took hold of the line and gave it a pull, and then a 'arder one. 'It's loose now,' says he, as the line come away. 'It's only a weed, arter all, old 'un. See, there's some on it on the hook now.'

"The old 'un gives a grunt and goes to clear his hook, when 'Hullo,' says he, 'this aint weed, it's too tough. Why! it's 'air!'

"'Air!' says Mr. Secketary; 'air, wot 'air?'

"Blow'd if I know—oss's or cow's, mayhaps—but it's 'air. Werry likely it's a drownded oss or a pig or summut in my swim, and that's it.'

"So the secketary he looks—and I see him turn suddenly pale. 'This aint neither oss's, nor cow's, nor pig's hair,' says he, quite solemn-like. 'If it's 'air at all—and it *is* 'air—it's 'air of a 'uman bein,' and from its length I judges as it's the 'air o' a woman.' Then me and my mate looks at it careful, and we both turns gashly pale. 'A woman's! wot woman's?'

"'Hullo there!' sings out the secketary, 'bring me them two grapples with the strong cords.' So they brings him two little triangular hooks with strongish lines—wot they has for clearin' the swims. Then he uncoils 'em, and pitches first one out into the stream, and draws it slowly in till it takes hold o' suthin' at the bottom; then he does the same with the t'other, and that takes hold too. Then he pulls 'em steady and strong, and the thing at the bottom gives way a little; so then he leads them down stream to where the hole shalleder off to the bank, and he pulls steady

and strong agen, and the thing gives way still more, and comes along and along, and further and further into the shaller water, when all of a sudden it gives a heave, and a lot o' nasty gassy-like bubbles comes breakin' and bustin' up to the surface ; and up rolls, close in to the bank, a great bundle o' summut like clothes, and it rolls over and over. It was the corpse o' a woman, mates ; and such a cry of 'orrer went up as it rolled over and the face was seen, with its long wivering, wavy 'air a-streaming down the water—I can hear it now. And there, though it was all a-bloated and discoloured like, we saw at once poor Mary, Bill's wife. We got her out ; but long afore we got her ~~out~~ but all the anglers—'cept one as said he warn't curous, and as stuck to the alder up yonder and won his match, as I heard—was round us a'-elpin' and lookin' on. Then we looked at her, and see a great smash right across the top of her skull, and the bone all broken and dented in like, and tight in her hand she clasped a button just sich as Bill wore, and a strip o' red plush same as his weskit was made on. We'd noticed the tear in his weskit at the time, but he warn't pleasant over it, so we never said no more about it. Me and my mate looked at one another, and he says, 'Bill done it for sure.'

" 'Who says I done it ?' says a 'oarse cracked voice ; 'who's a-lyin' like thunder that ways ?' and Bill busts through into the crowd, 'alf drunk and 'alt mad, and then he casts his eye on the corpse. He stood staring stock silent like a dumb statty, and there was a dead silence for nigh a minute, and then all of a sudden he throws himself right down on the

corpse, a-sobbin' and cryin' in the horfullest way—like a steam biler a-guggling and bustin' it was—and clutches 'old of her, all draggled, wet, and slimy, with a great cry that went though us all. ‘Oh! Mary, Mary, I didn’t go to do it, I didn’t mean it. Oh, my dear, my heart! my love! it’s all along o’ me and the ’orrid drink as you come by this dreadful end;’ and he kisses her face, all wet and blue, convulsive agin and agin. Then he rises up and says, quite calm but ’oarse, in a sort of loud whisper, ‘Mates, I done it; take me away to the pollis, for I’ve bin in hell ever since, and I can’t bear my life no longer. We quarrelled and fit arter you went, and I up with the tiller in a suddent fury and hit ’er over the ’ead with it. She fell overboard without a word, and I sat and watched the water, lookin’ for her to come up agin, for I never thought I’d k—k—killed her; oh, no, never! But she didn’t—and that’s all. Take me away.’ He confessed it all at the trial, and was ’anged for it, and that’s enuff to warn any man off liquor, you’ll allow; but it’s a dolesome story, so let’s fill the jug again. Poor Bill! ”

Soon after the story ended the snow ceased, and, as the afternoon was now far advanced, we bade our kind entertainer adieu.

“ Well, if ye must, mates, why, here’s good-bye and God bless ye both, and thank ye heartily for me. May ye never spend a wuss Crismas, nor do nout wuss on the day! As for me, I loves all anglers; and wen I’m cap’n of a barge, as I expects to be ’fore long, no net shall never travel up and down in she on the Lea.”

"Stick to that, old friend, stick to that," said Uncle Ben, "all your life long ; and Heaven bless and prosper *you*, and may we drink a many more pints o' purl aboard the William and Mary when you're cap'n, as you will be." And we often did so, too, for not long after he *was* made a cap'n—Potts of Stortford owner. But Lord bless you ! by this time he's got on so that, if he isn't Potts of Stortford himself, he's his partner, as all such good fellows as he, as avoids publics and poachin', ought to be, as Uncle Ben says ; and Uncle Ben's always right—at least so my young 'uns and my missus says, and consequently "so says all of us."

THE POACHER.

When I was bound apprentice
In vamous Zummersetshire,
I zarved my measter truly for nearly seven long year,
Till I took up wi' poarchin', which quickly shall appear,
For it's my delight of a shiny night
In the season of the year.

THAT is how I used to sing it, and how I always heard it sung forty years ago ; but now someone tells me that Zummerset has no claim to it, but that some Great Tom of Lincoln first trolled out these strains, and that it ought to be "famous Lincolnshire," and that there is an earlier edition in Lincoln than that of Zummerset of the fine old poacher's song. If that is so, all I can say is, then, that it is a pity it was not discovered and popularised forty years ago ; for, Lincoln or no Lincoln, "I sticks by old Zummerset." No doubt one has heard of Lincoln green ; it might have been a popular colour formerly, with poachers such as Robin Hood, Scarlet, Mutch, and Little John, and all the tribe of broken gentlemen and gentle outlaws ; but there is not much green in the eye of a Zummerset swain, and whenever I sing the song I intend my apprenticeship to have been gone through in Zummerset and never Lincoln. I don't believe they know

how to poach in that county of fens, bogs, and drains—a great flat pancake of a place that gives one the ague to think of, and where a fellow could be seen setting a snare a mile off, and identified with a Dollond at two. 'Tis the country, without a doubt, where Don Quixote rode a tilt at the windmills—and he needn't ride far there, either, to do it; but not the sort of place for poaching to thrive much in—not like Zummerset, where they suck it in with their mother's milk, and make snares with their tiny fingers and mammy's hair before they know the use of them.

Poaching, no doubt, sprang up from the peculiar state of the country, under the tremendously severe repressive laws enacted at the feudal period. Men, who had otherwise offended against the law, took refuge from hanging or mutilation amongst the numerous tribes of outlaws which infested more or less the great impenetrable woodlands that everywhere existed then. Here they "took up wi' poarchin'," and the abbots, the earls, or even the King's bonny dun deer, furnished a good part of their livelihood. These men were popular among the inhabitants, although often great scamps according to modern morals, because they confined their depredations chiefly to the well-to-do classes, and rarely troubled "the people," more often finding their account in doing a good turn here or there. As time flew on, the feudal system and laws died away; the dun deer disappeared within walled or paled inclosures; outlaws no longer existed, save as a species of legal fiction; the poacher became a different sort of creature altogether, though still a sort of popular sympathy hung to him—for

You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
.But the scent of the poacher will cling round him still.

And so it comes to pass that the veriest ruffian who is a simple stealer of home-bred birds finds defence and sympathy where he certainly ought not.

Now there are all sorts of poachers. There is the regular country poacher, who picks up his crumbs occasionally, who works intermittently and by himself ; there is the poacher who makes more of a business of it, who has a mate and a little boy to spy for him ; there is that precious rogue the town poacher, who does the thing wholesale and works in gangs, to whom violence is familiar as household words, and a deal more so ; there is the respectable poacher who shoots anywhere and everywhere, and trusts to cheek or his respectability to get him out of any fix he may get into. There are, in fact, as many kinds of poachers as there are of poaching, or as there are of thieves in a town. The fact is that game is the most easily convertible property in the country, and the most difficult to identify of all property. If you steal sheep, or fowls, or horses, they are much less easy to dispose of, and are much more easy to detect. Added to this, there are foolish people who, not possessing any game themselves to steal, don't mind encouraging the *mauvais sujets* either of town or country to steal it for them, because they hope to get it a little cheaper, quite forgetting that, if you encourage a man to break the law on one point, you may rest assured that he will, sooner or later, break it in another. There is quite as much tendency to dishonesty in the country as the town, and game is the handiest thing to steal, and thus the young

criminal usually commences on it ; but, given the tendency referred to, and if the game were not there, he would lay hands on something else. Then the stupid sympathy which country papers too often bestow upon poachers assists in doing an immense amount of mischief. But all this has been very much threshed over before, so I will not dwell on it.

The youthful poacher nearly always begins on a rabbit ; either his dog, or somebody else's dog which he has charge of for a space, pounces on a rabbit suddenly, and young Joskin first handles stolen game. Sheep dogs are often a terrible nuisance in this way, and a clever one at the game will keep his master's larder going for months with rabbits, leverets, and what not. There was one that I had on my place when I lived in Buckinghamshire, which I was told killed some sixty rabbits in one season. I never could catch him, worse luck. Then among poaching dogs there are self-hunting dogs of all sorts, which go out on their own account, and worry your hedgerows into fits for their amusement or their appetite. I saw a colley only lately in Hampshire hunt a turnip field all over while his master was pitching hurdles, and he hunted it in a way that made me long to borrow him either for my own sport or for a halter. He was a workman, and never left a yard of a very large field unbeaten. I remember a little dog that belonged to my landlord down in Bucks, who used to hunt my best hedges almost daily remorselessly. You could at times hear his infernal "yap, yap, yap" all over the place. He was a blackish-blue Scotch terrier, with a broken and twisted fore leg, and rejoiced in the sobri-

quet of Punch. Punch was very good friends with me, and when any of the family came to call, he condescended to be familiar; but Punch and I fell out. He would come and beat my shrubberies, and I didn't like it. I had hunted and shouted and pelted him off once or twice, but he didn't take the hint; so I loaded a barrel lightly with dust shot, and waited the event. The next afternoon happened to be Sunday; but it wasn't a day of rest for Punch. At about three in the afternoon I heard the accustomed "yap, yap" in the shrubbery, and the next moment a rabbit bolted full split across the lawn. I took hold of the gun and went to the front door, which was open, and the next moment out bounced Punch on to the lawn, in full chase. When he saw me he pulled up and reconnoitred. He was about forty-five yards off; and as he turned end-on I let him have it, and he went back through the shrubbery singing "Pen and ink" very much out of tune. I saw nothing of Punch for several days; he was clearly full against shrubberies. His master brought him down one day when he came to see me; but Punch seemed rather inclined to be unobtrusive, and skulked somewhat. "Punchey, Punchey!" I said, in the sweetest and most persuasive accents. "Gurr-r-r," answered Punch. "Why, Punch," said his master, "what ever is the meaning of that, sir? You know Mr. F., Punchey. Now, come here and behave." "Gurr-r-r," went Punch again. His master's back being towards me, I stretched out my hand and took hold of the gun which was standing in the corner; and when Punch saw that, he meandered about as quickly as any dog

I ever saw, and the louder we called him the quicker he *put*. "Dear me, what an extraordinary thing!" said his owner.

"*Most* extraordinary," I replied. "Dog must be mad, or going mad. Seen anything queer about him lately?"

"Well, now you mention it, he was very uneasy for two or three days."

"Ah, I should not wonder," I said, with what Mrs. Brown at the play described as a "*canister*" expression of countenance.

"And, besides being restless, he didn't feed well, and seemed quite melancholy."

"*In-deed!* Ah, that sounds all wrong—incipient hydrophobia, eh? That's just how it commences. I once had a terrier that—&c., &c., &c. If I were you, I'd tie him up for a few weeks, so as to be on the safe side."

"I will, most certainly." And dear Punchey was tied up, and, as he didn't like it, he gnawed or slipped his cord, and bolted, and was never seen after. Punch was much lamented, and I was "very sorry, awfully sorry, don't you know—quite too much so, really."

Then, there are cats: but there's no need to say much about them. The worst poacher and vermin going is the domestic cat when he forsakes the fire-side and takes to the hedges, and many an one have I categorically extinguished. "Cruelty to animals!" Rubbish! How do you think the rabbits and partridges like being chevied to death or clawed to ribbons? Cats won't pay in a game preserve, no how, no, sir. But to get back to boys. The next move

usually is to beg, borrow, buy, or steal a ferret ; then they are entered to the profession, and, if they don't get a sharp check, there they are on the high road to Portland, or the gallows even. I caught some young scamps once ferreting on a Sunday afternoon. One of the lads, a boy of thirteen or fourteen, was the son of a very decent old creature, who came to me in tears and begged hard to have him let off ; the other was a rank reprobate of fifteen or sixteen. I was half inclined to let them off, but resolved at least to hear the case first ; so on the day I went. They were fined a pound, or a fortnight. My feelings had previously been duly worked on, and I had made up my mind to let them off, and was on the point of saying so, when I saw the elder wink at the younger, as much as to say, "Done him." Then I hardened my heart, and said "No ; away with him to the deepest dungeon beneath the castle moat ;" and they had a fortnight at Ailesbury. Four or five years after, when I had left the neighbourhood some time, I went down to see a friend. While at his house, a decentish old housekeeping sort of body came smiling and curtseying up to me. "You don't remember me, sir ?" "No, I don't." "Please, I'm Martha Brooks." "Indeed ! well, I am not much wiser." "Please, sir, don't you remember my son, sir ? Him as you ketched a-rabbitin', sir, as I come to beg 'im off of you, sir." "Oh, yes ; now I remember ; and I wouldn't let 'em off because I saw 'em winking at one another. Wants a good deal of impudence to wink in the dock." "Ah, sir, I thought you was turrible 'ard, sir, then—turrible ; but, sir, I've never done nothink but thank

you ever since. He were a-gettin' into bad comp'ny and bad ways, sir, he were ; an' that there fortnight at Ailesbury just stopped him in time. He've bin a good boy, sir, ever since, and have stopped at 'ome, and is gettin' on so well, sir ! and Mr. Taylor, sir, he's a-employin' of him as 'orse keeper, and he's a gettin' on well and quite steady, and I've always 'ad it on my mind, sir, to thank you, sir. Ah, we don't allays know what's good for us ! ” and the old Biddy curtseyed away like a China mandarin. “ Queer thing ! ” thought I ; “ but 'tisn't many mothers would thank you for sending their sons to jail ; ” and, as this is a simple fact and true to the letter, it seems to me *à propos* to the subject. I suppose the system at Ailesbury at that time was a good one, and effected what it meant to. What it does now I can't say. If the boy poacher is not checked, of course he becomes a man poacher in time, and supplies his larder from time to time as he may fancy ; and probably he labours regularly in the fields and never gets caught, and so keeps a fair face to the world. Happily, however, he goes into it holus bolus as a profession, joins with others, and sells his game ; then he becomes a nuisance to society. But there is a neutral zone between these, made up of part work, part poaching —made up, in fact of graduators ; for, as *nemo repente fuit turpissimus*, so no one, as a rule, becomes an accomplished and reckless poacher all at once.

Some poachers have a sort of a spice of honour about them, too. I remember a case told me by my friend Hengler. Hengler had some shooting Marlow way. There was a noted fellow there—and to be

noted in the Marlow district, where poaching was as hot as a forcing pit, was something tallish. Jack Baggs, as we'll call him, lived by poaching and nothing else. He was a topper at it, and was rarely caught. One day, however, Hengler caught him, summoned him, and had him fined 5*l.*, with 2*l.* for ex's, &c. "Muster Hengler," said Jack, as he shelled out the coin, "that 'ere 'll be a werry expensive seven pound for you, you mark my words ;" and it was. Jack Baggs stuck to him—never left him. He made his life a burthen to him, and for four years he worked my friend Hengler unmercifully. As to catching him, catch a weasel asleep, catch a flea in a haystack, catch —anything you can't catch. At last, after having endured it for four years, when Jack had had fifty or a hundred times the tally out of him, he met him one day in the high road. His dog was standing some birds in the next field, and Jack, with that rollicking cheek which so endeared him to his friends, went up to Hengler and said to him, as he was getting over the gate, "Beg pard'n, Muster Hengler, but could I have a shot at 'em if they cooms this way ?" "If you like, Jack ; but where's your gun ?" said Hengler, greatly tickled. "Oh, here's the gun," said Jack, producing the stock from one under-side-pocket, and the barrel from the other. The birds did go Jack's way, and Jack got a brace and brought them to Hengler. "Oh, no, Jack, you shot 'em, and you keep 'em—I shan't take 'em ; you're welcome to the shot. And now, Jack," said Hengler, "don't you think, honestly, that you've pretty well worked that seven pound out ? Couldn't you give someone else a turn

now? We don't bear malice, you know; but, dash it, enough's as good as a feast, surely."

"W-a-a-l, Muster Hengler," said Jack, in his drawling way, "I dessay I has. Y-a-a-s, I dessay I has about worked that siven pun out. Yaas, yaas—well, there, y-a-a-s, I think I has, and we'll shake hands over it and say naw moor about it."

And Jack Baggs never came on my friend's ground after; and that's another true story, word for word.

These, however, nuisances as they are, are all what I call legitimate poachers; but the gang of scoundrels who come out of big towns, and who are the scum of the population—ruffians who, if interfered with by some unfortunate keeper, anxious to protect the pheasants he has reared and the property committed to his care, make no more of setting on him and smashing him with bludgeons, or sending a charge of shot into him, then they would of knocking a hare on the poll—blackguards and villians whose sole object is plunder and violence—these are human vermin. On them I would have no sort of mercy; and when one of these savages does get knocked on the head in his attempt to murder a keeper, I feel inclined to deliver the verdict of justifiable homicide—very justifiable too—indeed, rather praiseworthy homicide than otherwise. They generally start out eight or ten strong in a couple of go-carts, with hundreds of yards of nets, dogs, guns, skull-crackers, and all complete; and the havoc they will work is something dreadful for the game preserver to contemplate. Yet even such outlaws as these not unfrequently find advocates in the miserable attenuated local journalism of the *Tweedle-*

shire Teapot, which delights to print rubbish about the feudal system, which they haven't the remotest conception of, and the oppressed down-trodden peasant, whom in reality they despise beyond measure—as if the men they are defending were one whit better than the garotter who choked the worthy editor himself perhaps last week, and may choke some other old woman next week if he is not caught.

Then there is that very troublesome party, the respectable poacher. He may take out a game licence, or, if a shade less respectable, only a gun licence. His manor, his great stock-in-trade, is cheek; and he knows no more “what the pig died of” than grandfather Smallweed did. Parsons sometimes are atrocious poachers when they shoot and fish much upon small resources; they have the notion that the cloth protects them, no doubt. I knew of one once, whom a friend caught a good quarter of a mile or more beyond his bounds in fishing some three or four times; and the excuse always was, that “he did not know—wasn't aware—begged pardon—would retire,” and so on. Of course a man who did not mind poaching repeatedly did not mind telling a lie. My friend reminded him that he had been set right on this head three times already, and if it happened again he would write to his bishop, and the threat was effectual.

There was one skunk in my neighbourhood who positively advertised for persons to join him in shooting—“comfortable home,” “use of dogs,” &c.—but who hadn't an acre of shooting. He got a day here and a day there, when and how he could. He didn't mind worrying his parishioners for a day now and then, and

they couldn't always refuse him; and when he couldn't get on otherwise he boldly poached and chanced it. I went to shoot with a friend one day, who told me that he had been bothering *him* for a day, but that he had flatly refused, saying I was expected to come, and there was no room for him. "And if he knows you're here," said my friend, "he's very likely to look over and see if you've got any birds." As I was shooting my way home along my own hedges, I was talking to "Garge" about the parson, and saying what I would do if ever I caught him on my land, when Garge turned round and said suddenly :

"Happen you won't be long o' meetin' of him then, sir, for here he be."

I had been shooting along a hedgerow, into which I had driven some birds, and which was right in the middle of my shooting ; and there was this incarnation of coolness entering the same field on the other side with his dog and gun, as if all the place belonged to him. I walked up to him, told him he was trespassing, and he really looked quite surprised. "Whose land is this ?" he asked.

"Why, it isn't yours, and that you know well enough ; and as for the shooting, it is mine, both ways as far as you can see."

"Yes, yes ; but the land, my dear sir—the land—who is the landlord ?"

"Lord Barrington."

"Ah ! just so" (with a persuasive smile). "I have leave over Lord Barrington's land."

"Ah !" I said, considerably riled, as I knew it was a lie ; "I don't care whose leave you have. If you

set foot on my shooting again, I'll summon you, my friend; and as for Lord Barrington, he lets the shooting to his tenants with all his farms, and never gives leave to anyone ; and I rent it. And that's your shortest way out ; and I am not at all sure I sha'n't summon you as it is ; and," I said significantly, for a parting shot, "I don't remember seeing your name in the licence list." This double barrel told, and he tried to bow himself out cheekily, but it was rather as if he had a blister in an inconvenient place ; and he wrote me an awfully civil apologetic note the next morning containing several more lies, and, what's more, never came on my land again.

Then there is the poacher who drives round the lanes promiscuously, with a fast trotting mare and a light cart with a friend, dog and gun well out of sight, but handy too. He sees a covey within distance of the hedge—no one looking, not a soul in sight. Out comes the gun. The horse is used to it, and stands like the White Horse at Ailesbury. Bang ! bang ! and a brace of birds are done for squatting. If he can get two or three in a line, the more the merrier, of course, for this kind of loafer rejoices in a pot. Out jumps the clever dog and fetches them, and up and off they go. He shoots and he rides away, it's all over in two or three minutes ; and, keeper or no keeper, he is quite safe and snug in his cart behind his fast-trotting mare. This kind of poacher often makes a decent bag in a fifteen-mile round. He knows all the quiet unfrequented roads, and pretty well all the crops and fields, and where to prospect with a decent chance of nailing something. We had

a queer fish down Portsmouth way when I was a young fellow—Myrtle his name: he was a rank poacher; the sort of man who never came home with empty pockets. If he couldn't shoot game, he would have something. He shot a whole flock of gallinas once, two and two, and was only nailed as he slaughtered the last brace; and he once saw some little pigs running away, and one stuck in the railings, and squeaked horribly. “Poor little piggy,” said Harry, looking all round carefully to see that no one was handy; “what! not got no one to take care of you? *I'll* take care of you”—and he did. One Sunday a friend saw him stalking off in a great hurry with a long cloak on. “What's Harry got a cloak on for, on a warm day like this?” he asked himself. “I'll lay a fiver he's got a gun under it.” And so he had. “Harry,” said my friend next day, “where were you going yesterday? Now, no gammon; you had a gun under that military cloak.” “All right, my boy,” with a violent wink. “Tom Toe (a sporting bricklayer of those parts) told me where he saw a ‘are in her form, and I just went to fetch her.’” “But you never shot her in her form? dash it!” “Well, ye see, I couldn't take it upon me to make a hare work on a Sunday.

I remember a very neat nail of one of these driving worthies once. His name was Willmerry, and he used to work round a neighbourhood where the holdings were not large, and the properties a good deal mixed. He had cleared off one or two coveys, to the intense disgust of one keeper, who thereupon schemed friend Wilmerry's discomfiture. One day he was

driving round the usual beat, when, peeping over a hedge into a rough grass field, there he saw—no—yes—was it?—no—by Jingo it was though!—a hare in her form, within twenty-five yards of the hedge, in some rough weed. It was just what he wanted. “Woa, old lass!” in a whisper. Out came the gun—click, click, bang—and over rolled poor pussy. “Here, Dinah! hi, fetch her, good bitch!” and over went Dinah like a bird. But as to fetching her, that was another matter; she got hold of the hare certainly, but the hare somehow wouldn’t come. “What the deuce is the matter? Dang it all! the keeper ’ll be out at the shot in a moment, if the dawg don’t make haste, and that Tompkins is a sharp chap. Hi ’long, good bitch! fetch him then!” But the good bitch couldn’t. “Dang it all, I must go and see what’s the matter, though it’s quite agin my principles to leave the cart; but I can’t leave the ’are behind, that’s agin principle too;” and down he stepped. “Steady, old mare!” and he hitched the bridle over a thorn bush, stepped over the hedge, and ran up towards the bitch, who seemed struggling with the hare. He hadn’t gone half-way when he saw it all. The hare was a dummy, artistically prepared and pegged down. He looked back, and there was Tompkins standing at the mare’s head, patting her; for she was a good, quiet old creature.

“Well, Muster Willmerry.” “Well, Tompkins; take a crown and square it?” “Not *this* time, Muster Willmerry.” “Well, say half a sov. then, dash it!” “No, no, Master Willmerry, nor half a sov. neither; you’ve had fifteen brace o’ birds off this very ground,

as I know. Well, now, 'spose you lay down fifteen 'alf-crowns, or say two pound, and we're quits.' Willmerry demurred, but it was no use ; and, on condition that the whole thing was to be kept strictly dark, at length he parted. He didn't care so much about the money as the scandal and loss of business it might cause if he were prosecuted ; though he had a notion that, clever as the stratagem was, the prosecution would fail. Still, that was not the point ; but somehow the story leaked out, and he got awfully roasted by his own particular cronies.

The cheekiest thing I ever knew done was done by a notorious ear-doctor, who was no end of a poacher. He went coolly into General Good's coverts at Pottleton, and began to shoot openly right away. His meeting with a keeper was a certainty ; and, after a time, when he had just shot a hare, he realised it, and up turned the head boss.

"Ah," he said, "I've—aw—been looking for you—aw—everywhere. Where have you been, my man ? I promised the general I'd send in a hare for dinner, as he wanted one fresh killed, aw ; so take that on to the cook at once, and make haste. And, by the way, I forgot whether he said dinner—aw—was at half-past six or seven. Oh, seven ! very good—aw. Then run in with this hare quick, and meet me round at the other side at Chipping Gate."

The keeper, of course, took the hare, and hurried off to the house with it ; the aurist went the other way, and had several shots, and bagged two or three brace of pheasants and a hare or two ; but never turned up at Chipping Gate. And, what's more, the keeper

didn't expect him, for when he got in to the general he found that the aurist had contrived to insert a very large flea in his ear, which told him all about it. And, what's more, that's another true story, and the man's alive now, only he is not an aurist—that's not his cue any longer. That game busted years ago.

Some keepers are blessed with a remarkably dry humour. There was one, I remember, who never could catch a certain Bill Boker ; but one day he happened to be up in a thick tree, under which were sundry rabbit holes, and Bill, who was doing a quiet bit of ferreting, came with a mate to the very spot. In the course of the operations they got a rabbit in a short hole that wouldn't bolt, and Bill lay down and thrust his arm into the hole.

"A can't reach 'im," soliloquised Bill. "Yes a can. I've got 'im. Coom out thear, wull 'ee," and out he lugged a kicking rabbit, and knocked it on the head with a pleasant grin, when the keeper just put his head out of the foliage above, and said, "Is 't a nice un, Bill ?"—not a word more or less. It was enough for Billy, who knew he was greatly wanted by the —shire bench.

I remember another poacher who was hard to catch—a dab at night-lining, snaring, &c.—Jim Bankes. The keeper, who was out with his master one day, saw a cat, and shot it, when he went to pick it up.

"Blessed if I haven't shot Jim Bankes' cat, the werry wussest poacher in the parish; aint't I glad," said the keeper. "I knows her by her one ear. Now we'll have some fun, and ketch Jim Bankes, too."

So he went and poked about the lake in the even-

ing, and pulled up one of Master Jim's night-lines. He then hooked the cat firmly on to one of the hooks and pitched it in, and went and hid himself. About four in the morning Jim came along, and took hold of the line.

“Got summat this time,” said Jim, and he hauled and hauled. “Summat heavy, too, it be ; and I 'ope as it's a pike or a big eel. At length it came to land, and, stooping down, he handled it. “Why, beggared if it baint a cat,” cried Jim, in intense disgust ; and, after a moment, “Beggared if it aint my cat,” as he felt the ear.

“Yes, Jim, and beggared if I ain't caught both you and your cat at last,” said a voice, which Jim knew well, behind him.

THE BANKER.

“I thank my God for my humility.”—*Richard II.*

OF all the varieties of the genus angler, there is none which has my sympathy so much as the genuine old-fashioned “banker,” or bank fisher. There are many bankers nowadays who are a disgrace to the name—foul-mouthed, beer-swilling ruffians, whose language and demeanour when at the river side render their neighbourhood a thing to be carefully avoided. Angling is essentially a quiet and contemplative recreation, and indiscriminate oaths mingled with semi-drunkןen revelry or wrangling, hard by one’s stand or swim, by no means add to the enjoyment of one’s fishing. But I speak not of such fellows as bring the pot-house to the river side with them—would that we could always avoid them!—but the humble, quiet bank fisher who gets away for one day in the week out of the smoke, dust, and toil of London, away from the soul-crushing city labour, to refresh his senses by peaceful, simple amusement by some river or brook in the country—who bathes himself in nature, as it were, weekly, to wash off some of the grime of art and labour—him I look upon with a pleasant paternal feeling; for he is a true angler like

myself, and an ardent disciple of our dear old father Izaak. How often have I seen him—

With his knacks
At his back,
wending his way
To sweet streams,
Lea or Thames,
To enjoy his leisure.

Haply some unusual circumstance has given him a holiday, and midnight sees him plodding steadily along past Hyde Park-corner and by Knightsbridge, on his way to some loved but far-off spot, miles away up the river. He will walk all night, and towards morning he will reach his destination.

Weary, toilsome, needless work, you think, when there are early third-class trains, which for a mere trifle would put him down within a mile or so of his fishing place? Then you know nothing, good critic, of the delight of a moonlight walk, with the great city far in the rear, and no sounds but those of nature around you, to the dweller in smoky London who, loving the country, has but few opportunities of visiting it. When I was a young man living in London, and having my daily occupation in the heart of it, many and many a time have I done the same thing; not from any necessity, but from a pure love of the walk, from a craving for air and exercise; and, as I have said before, often have I tramped away, sometimes alone, sometimes with a friend, over Wimbledon Common, under the broad moonlight at two o'clock in the morning, to reach Hampton Court, or rather Molesey, and knock up old Wisdom at daybreak, for a long

day amongst the roach, dace, bream, and barbel ; and I can look back to none of all my many fishing expeditions with half the fondness or delight which I do to those. How I revelled in that night walk, how it comes back to me in memory ! How I enjoyed the cup of hot coffee ; the yarn with old Bill ; the very smell of the rushes and the river ; the sight of the green hedges and the sparkling water ; the rustling of the splendid trees close at hand ; with the sense of being afloat again for a day on the river (not a common or every-day occurrence then by any means) ! And what sport we used to have, too, in those good old days five-and-twenty years ago ! Yet my home of residence was not a very dull or dreary one, for I lived upon dear old Cheyne Walk, hard by the Don Saltero, and the river was not strange to me, though it was not the same altogether that it was at Hampton Court. And if I enjoyed the change so much, and still more the method of arriving at it, how much more must the poor man, who lives in some close pestiferous court, and sees nothing but chimney pots, close workshops, and dirty streets, filth, beggary, and crime all around, and who becomes fossilised into a sort of secondary strata, with smoke above him, and gutters by way of a primary formation below.

For days and days previously with what ardour has he looked forward to this day's enjoyment. How he has watched and noted the signs of the weather and the portents as to the state of the water. How he has raked over his scanty collection of hooks and lines and floats, all home-made as far as possible ; with what fondness he gazes on that small lock of sorrel

hair plucked from the tail of one of Snarkly and Workus's horses by a friendly drayman—not easy to obtain anywhere now, trust me. How carefully, too, that bank runner which is to fetch him an eel or two, haply, as a great treat, is looked over, and every splice in that wonderfully contrived rod is anxiously scanned and varnished. And then the ground bait, what an anxious task that is to prepare, and the paste to be made, and the penn'orth of well-scoured liver gentles, and the penn'orth of red worms to be got where the best penn'orths can be had—and who knows that better than he does? What a job it is to get all this in proper order and properly packed, too; and when the happy night arrives, with his bundle of sticks and his basket on his back, he kisses "the old woman and the kids," and, whistling a tune of gladness, he is out and away on the great western road, throwing the miles behind him, and a-whistling of a tune louder than ever. The last public on the road has long been closed, night rules supreme; the stars shine in a galaxy o'erhead. Now and then the sweet full notes of a nightingale may be heard far away, or even the less tuneful and nearer hoot of an owl, or flocks of wild fowl may be making mournful notes high up o'er head, as they journey tireless through the realms of air—whither? How lovely the world seems to him at this moment! and what a contrast to that stifling court behind! His mind flies back to the happiest times of his life, and memory is busy within him "inditing of a good matter." But the nights are full short now, and so towards daybreak, haply, he comes upon some well-known old-fashioned wayside public, where the

market carts and night waggons call for their early purl, and, having perhaps walked a good round dozen of miles, a shining pewter vase of early purl does not come amiss to him ; and, mark me, that same early purl, when deftly mixed and fairly drunk, is a wholesome, toothsome, and comforting thing. Think not, poor reveller, that your morning “doctor” of eggs and eau de vie, or hock and soda, after a night’s dissipation, refreshing for the moment though it may be, can equal the draught of early purl honestly gained by a twelve-mile stretch through the night. Only try it, if you have the stuff left in you for it, and I warrant me that you will not look down upon that *cratur* and say, like Sir Charles Coldstream, that “there’s nothing in it.” Perhaps, too, a snack of cold bacon and a hunch of bread, just to keep out the chilliness of the morning air, is handed down into the provision warehouse to keep it company, and then a meditative shaugh of the pipe follows to make everything all right ; and this perhaps leads to half an hour’s forty winks in the neighbouring stable on half a dozen trusses of delicious hay, by favour of his old acquaintance and gossip Will’m ostler, as it is over early to seek the river-side yet.

But the sun rises, and the banker, like a giant refreshed, rises with it and betakes him, all glowing with hope and eagerness, the culmination of long and delicious anticipation, down the road, over the hedge, across the meadow, “brushing with hasty steps the dew away ;” through the gap, and so down to the favourite old willow stump where he lost the big chub last year. Is that big chub there yet ? is a question

of no little moment with him ; and will he bite again to-day ? and, if he should, will he have the luck to land him ? If so—— ; but no, the hope seems too presumptuous. And now he stands on the river bank, and scans with curious and inquiring eye the scene of many a pleasant hour ; for this is, of all his favourite haunts, the most favourite fishing stand of our banker. Carefully he treads the bank, that he may not disturb the wary fish. The mist is just lifting from the water, which is tolerably high, as bankers like it to be, for it drives the fish in to the sides. There has been rain of late, and the river is of a nice grey colour too, and is evidently clearing from the flood. All is as it should be when at the best, and promises well for sport. His heart beats high with confidence, and he mutters to himself, “ Some on ‘em ’ll nick it afore this day’s out, or I ain’t no prophet. Never see the water in finer order, nor the swim in better twig, in my life ; and better nor all, there’s no bran nor no muck about neither, so no one ain’t fished it this flood yet, and I’ve the first on it. I wun’t take ten pound o’ fish for this day’s work—don’t know as I’d take twelve. By Jeerusalem ! shouldn’t wonder if I got as igh as fifteen—and I never did that here but once, and then—why, then it was jest sich a day as this ! ”

Meanwhile, he has mixed his bran, bread, and boiled rice, wetted, and kneaded it up in a large cotton pocket-handkerchief—a goodly lump of it. The bank runner, with its four hooks, is suitably baited, and pitched out into the stream, and, we are glad to say, does during the day yield two or three nice eels, which will form a sumptuous repast on the morrow. His baits are

arranged to hand ; his home-made landing net, a hazel stick and a wire ring, sticks in the turf hard by ; his old rod—a miracle of splinters and wax-ends, a compound of bamboo, lancewood, and umbrella sticks, and tied in a dozen places—is carefully put together ; a little reel, so small that it is a wonder what such things are made for, holds his running line—some ten yards or so of fine water cord, at twopence a hank. His tackle is of the roughest ; his float a swan's quill, rude but serviceable ; his line “a thing of shreds and patches ;” all bespeak the humbleness of his means, save his hook and the link of hair it is tied on—these are as choice as any angler need desire. All is ready ; he has plumbed his depth ; tested the bottom to see that all is clear, and that the flood has deposited no bushes or dangerous obstructions in the swim. “Plump, plump, plump,” in go three balls of ground bait ; the little three-joint fold-up stool is fixed and planted under the old pollard stump ; the morning is fairly awake, and *so is the banker*. Now for it !

We need not follow his sport. We rejoice to say that it is a very big red-letter day with our banker. He has topped even the distantly hoped for 15lb. by more than half a pound. He has hooked the big chub —ay, and he has basketed him too ; and there he lies, a majestic 2-pounder, and the biggest fish he ever caught. No king so great as he, no conqueror more glorious ; he has fulfilled his ambition. Is he happy, think you ? Happy, why he is absolutely radiant ! He is not only at peace with himself, but with all the world, and gladness hums within him as though he were a hive flowing with milk and honey. He'd go

out of his way, a mile or two, I know now, to do anyone a kind turn ; as for his catch, that of a certainty will pleasure several poor bodies when he gets home. His face is a perfect Christmas face, and a great medicine for low spirits. What if he only earns eighteen bob a week ! why, he couldn't have enjoyed himself more if he earned eighty. So "there's no place in the world like old Hengland, no place in old Hengland to go a-fishin' from like London (chimneys and gutters notwithstanding), and no river to go fishin' to, when you knows where to go, and can drop on 'em,' like the Thames. Don't tell me ! " This is the sweet contentment that Walton talks, sings of, and worships ; and it is all true too, true to the very spirit and letter. "And then, dear me, here's the Jolly Waggoners again, as I live ; and we must be drinking again, Master Critic—we really must. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that men of all classes like to drink when thirsty, and enjoy fermented liquors as a medium pleasant to the palate. It may be very wrong and very low to mention it, but I can't, for the life of me, see why. It is the custom, you see, with high and low, and a custom, may be, honoured more in the breach than the observance. But even that, save to a "total abstainer," does not consign it to the unmentionable ; and four penn'orth o' gin and water 'ot, and a pipe, after such a glorious day, before walkin' 'ome again, won't hurt nobody, for "it's a poor 'art as never rejoices when it have enjoyed itself." And to this also we say "Amen." It is the only fourpenn'orth he has had, or will have, this day. How many haply have had his mates in London, now qualifying for a night

in the station-house, a fine of five shillings, with severe indisposition to do any work harder than skittles the next day? Poor fellows! but they don't know any better, bless you; they're not anglers, worse luck for them! And, to crown the glory of the day, while he is smoking his pipe who should come in, just for half a pint, but his old chum, Bill Waggles, the Chertsey carrier, who is going "up" on an unusual errand with an assortment of dry goods, which, happily, have produced their obvious effect and particular attribute in Waggles himself. To him our banker, "Why, Will!" Answers Will, "Wot, mate! why, who'd a thought o' seein' you?" "And who'd a thought o' seeing you, old boy?" "Lor, I be so glad to see 'ee; why, we aint had a jaw together this year an' more. Goin' up? But in course you be. Bin a fishin', too, as ushual; always a-fishin', ses you. Well, it's a hearty sport for them's likes it. Rayther prefers rattin' myself—more livelier like. But there, stop a bit while I makes a snug corner for ye under the tilt." And so, lolling amongst sacks of oats, barrels of beer, cheeses, and other soft and convenient settees, superior for comfort to any of Gillow's, the banker jingles steadily home in excess of luxurious ease, talking over the reminiscences of their mutual youth with his old friend in low drowsy tones, now and then broken by a quiet but glad laugh; and the stars, who are clearly of the party, twinkle down upon them as brightly as they do upon kings and kaisers, and tell, perhaps, to their simple souls stories of things above them, which they do not tell to everybody. Happy banker!

REMINISCENCES OF AN ANGLER; OR, JUSTICES' JUSTICE.

"Thus hath the court of justice wheeled about."—*Richard III.*

IN looking for angling reminiscences through my old tackle box, I came upon some that befel me during the great railway mania. What a time that was ! How outrageously mad the whole population were, and what a heap of money was fooled away by the great British public ! As for the engineers and surveyors it seemed as if the country was delivered over to their tender mercies to do as they liked with it, and the way we levelled through gentlemen's grounds, and carved ways through their plantations, regardless of expense, and quite without consideration as to what the feelings of the owners might be, was something to see; and gave one very free notions of the rights of property. Had it lasted much longer, I fear that I for one should have been quite demoralised, and should have received the ineradicable impression that "engineer" and "buccaneer" were convertible terms. On some lines we were opposed ; but, bless you ? if a proprietor hired twenty keepers and watchers to oppose us, we hired fifty roughs and rips from the nearest town to oppose them, and the British

public paid for them. What did we care? Any noodle who had ever handled a level or chain could get his five guineas a day and expenses, and as much champagne as he cared for. Ah! as the song says,

Will those days, will those days,
Will those days come not again?

While on one line, fate brought us to the primitive little village of Downton, situated on the Avon, some miles south of Salisbury. It has a wide, clean street, and a very comfortable public, with a tap of old home-brewed that you must not play tricks with—a peaceful village in truth, where it would be hard to get into mischief, one would think. Still I did very innocently contrive to get into mischief there, and in the course of my first visit to Downton I had the supreme felicity of being walked up the middle of that uninteresting "High-street" in durance vile of a pair of rural policemen—it is needless to say stupid rural policemen, for whoever saw one that wasn't? Yes, I was walked up that street on (I would blush if my cuticle permitted it) a Sunday afternoon. With suitable lamentations I say, *Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.* I had been poaching on a Sunday. Yea, my friends, the truth must be told that I had been fishing where I had no business to be, it seems, and had been arrested by the strong arm of the law, or rather four strong arms thereof; and thus it fell out.

I confess that in those days I saw no great harm in wandering by the river side, rod in hand, on a Sunday; indeed, I had little chance of wandering thus on any other day. It seemed to me to be a peaceful and harmless occupation enough, and rather in harmony

with the day than otherwise ; and, although I am not about to defend the practice, and have, rather in deference to Mrs. Grundy, and the opinions of others than from any self-convictions, long since ceased from it, yet, although I have often turned it over in my mind, I can find no canon of the Church or otherwise that forbids it. We are forbidden to work, but we are not forbidden to amuse ourselves within reason ; and we do smoke and read our newspapers, and drink or talk over our neighbours, and do many other things which more presumably moral folks think comparatively harmless. But the great majority forbid it, and in this country we bow to that decision if we do not want a rough time of it.

In my extenuation I can only say that in those days I was an articled pup in an office, with very few holidays, and an absorbing love of the rod, and I did now and then transgress in the manner stated. It happened, as I have said, that I found myself in the course of my railway work in the lively village of Downton. I had had a couple of months or so of very hard work. Sunday at Downton gave one an idea of a general agricultural tomb, with liquid funereal accompaniments. Heavens ! how dreary it was ! I thought of Alexander Selkirk. It was true that "I was monarch of all I surveyed," but that brought no comfort, for the survey was only 12ft. by 14ft. of stuffy inn parlour. I repeated :

Oh solitude, where are the charms that sages have seen in thy face ?

Better dwell in the midst of alarms than reign in this horrible place.

Alarms ! I give you my word, sir, that if a mad bull had charged the inn door, or a raging Bengal tiger struck down the landlord on his own door-step, or a “bounding grizzly bear,” as the showmen describe him, had carried off the landlady’s tom cat (who made night doleful by his wails across the street) to the neighbouring chimney pot, I should have regarded it as quite a Godsend. Now, did you ever—did you, dear kind friendly reader—spend a day under similiar circumstances ? If so, lay your “‘and on your ’rt,” as they say at the Transpontine theatres, and tell me what were *your* feelings. For amusement or distraction there was only, as the waiter in *Punch* remarked, “Gin, sir ; brandy, sir ; rum, sir ;” and if I was in bad spirits, my state of misery was aggravated by my being compelled to allow that the Horse was in worse. And besides, I never had any strong predilection for solitary drinking, and even solitary smoking won’t last for ever. The afternoon was fine, and I thought a stroll up the river would do me no great harm. I had a fly rod—indeed, I always had one somewhere among my luggage in those days—and I thought I might as well take that with me. Doubting whether such a thing might be looked upon with a very unfavourable eye, I called in the landlord and consulted him. His views were latitudinarian in one sense, though he held that whatever a good customer did was right in another. A convenient dogma, favourable to morality, comfort, and profit. He did not seem to think there *was* any general objection. I asked him “Where could I go ?” and he told me to go up the bank beyond the mill, and if anyone

came to me to mention his name, and it would prove a talisman of great power. I did not find it so. He might as well have been John Smith, of London, as landlord of the White Horse, of Downton.

However, taking my rod, I strolled off, and, finding a footpath by the river side, I got out my rod and began to fish. The river did not look very likely, but from it flowed a small side-stream, running back towards the mill, which looked very tempting, and I left the main river to try it. I had proceeded along it some distance, and had just taken a trout of $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb., when there came out of the mill the miller. He looked at me much as the gude-man in the old Scotch song might have looked when asking his wife, "How came a mon here wi'out the leave o' me?" and the answer apparently was not equally satisfactory, for presently a youth—species rustic, genus lout, of course—came to me and said in effect that "master had sent him to say he'd be werry much 'bleeged if I wouldn't fish in that water, as he hadn't given leave to anyone to fish it this season." Whether the boy had misunderstood or misconveyed his message or no, I cannot say; but, naturally supposing he referred to the pretty bit of water I was fishing in, I said "Certainly, I will leave it immediately." I mentioned the cabalistic name of the landlord, and the genius at once withdrew into the jar, or rather the mill; and thinking the name of that Solomon had proved the talisman I thought it, and done the business, I made my way back again to the main river, some eighty or a hundred yards off. The river

was not trout water, being a heavy mill-head, full of big jack and a few roach and dace, and I was strolling on, giving a whip now and then, not with any idea of really fishing, but because it was easier than tackling up. I smoked my pipe in calm serenity, without any idea of catching anything, meandering and mooning, and certainly not harming anyone ; when on looking round I saw two rural bobbies marching down the bank, with heads erect, and majesty in their port. “Where the deuce can they be going ? up to the next village, I suppose,” thought I—when, to my surprise, they came straight to me and collared me.

“Holloa,” quoth I, “what is the meaning of this ?” “You was ordered by Mr. B. to go away, and you didn’t.” “That’s a ——” (I’m afraid the epithet I used was not a choice one) ; “I was requested very civilly to leave that water down there, and I at once left it.” “You was ordered to go, and didn’t, and Muster B. have giv’ you in charge, so you must come along of we to Muster Shakeberry.” (That is not exactly his name, but is as near as it is proper to go to it.) “Now look here, my friends,” said I, “have the goodness to take your hands off my collar. If you want me to accompany you, I will do so, but if you are going to lug me along, by George you shall carry me.” The proposal was not agreeable to them, for the road was narrow, boggy, slippy, and the river convenient ; so they consented to allow me to use my own legs instead of theirs, and I walked into the village, with the majesty of the law on either side

of me, up the main street, with three-fourths of the population of Downton at my heels.

In an ordinary way I should have been mortally ashamed of my situation, but I was in such a towering rage that I did not care twopence for anybody or anything. I had been swindled, and if I *was* a sinner, I considered myself a betrayed and deluded one. The landlord was a false prophet and an impostor; the miller a deceptive duffer, who did not know his own mind nor his own language; his boy an idiotic atomy, who could not carry a message; my captors twelve feet of bone and sinew without brains—they might have ordered me off, taken my name, and summoned me, without making me a spectacle in this way; the crowd were chawbacons, only fit to grin through a horse collar. I was an injured and truly virtuous individual, subjugated by a complicated tyranny.

Up to the justice's we went, through the gates, up the gravel walk, and knocked at the door, the crowd amusing themselves meanwhile by peeping in between the bars and ornaments of the front gate; and whether I had been burning ricks, or robbing a church or a neighbouring bank, seemed to be a very divided opinion. Out came to inspect me the cook and the housekeeper; out came the housemaids, one of whom was pretty. This pulled me together a bit; I enlisted her sympathies at once by bestowing on her a friendly droop of the dexter eyelid in pure bravado, the housekeeper being so horrified thereat—she was old and ugly—that she held up her hands as if she had seen her master brought in on a shutter at least. How-

ever, the great man was not at home, so we proceeded back towards the inn, and met him coming home in his chaise.

He had been out to lunch or early dinner, and had a comfortable allowance of solid and fluid under his belt ; I could see several glasses of port in his nose. He was, in truth, a most jovial, pleasant old gentleman. He had been in the navy, and retired to the enjoyment of a country life, carrying all that was good of him with him. The chaise stopped. “ Now, what *is* all this ? ” and the justice eyed me over, then heard what my captors had to say, and said, “ Go down to the White Horse ; I ’ll be there presently.” Again the procession was formed, and we resumed our triumphal march—my guards Hob and Nob, with Snob in a tumultuous and overwhelming mob in the rear. Thanks be, the White Horse soon opened his rack and manger to receive me, and I was screened from the gaze of the vulgar at last.

Anon the great man came. He heard the statement of Hob and Nob ; then I mildly put in my own ; and then—what a wigging he gave the policemen ! “ Here,” he said, “ you fellows come and make all this uproar, and hunt me up on a Sunday afternoon for nothing. If you had taken the young gentleman’s name, and where he was staying, and warned him off, you could have summoned him to-morrow, and avoided all this hullabaloo. It is a most extraordinary thing, but if a poor fellow cuts a stick out of a hedge or a turf from the side of the road, you come and bother me to death with it, and upset the whole place ; but if a burglary is committed, or half a score of ricks burnt

down, you know nothing about it. The young gentleman of course was wrong, very wrong. Fishing on a Sunday—very reprehensible indeed ! Dear me ! without leave, too ! ” And he looked at me with a half-quizzical, half-comical air. “ You’ll get out a summons, d’ye hear ? and come and serve it on this young gentleman the first thing to-morrow morning. Come to me at eight o’clock to-morrow morning, and I’ll make it out ; d’ye hear ? And ” (as the bobbies bowed themselves out very much crestfallen) “ you be off at seven,” he continued, turning to me.

Need I say that I took the advice so kindly tendered, and that when the cavasses made their appearance a few minutes after eight the next morning, Bedreddin—that’s me—was not bed-ridden, but was standing at the gates of Damascus, otherwise Salisbury, and the disappointed seekers realised the truth of the old saying, “ It’s the early bird that catches the worm,” with painful distinctness. The nest was still warm, but “ the bird which sung so sweetly had flown.” The summons and the law were there, but the worm had wisely absquatulated, thanks to the noblest beak I ever had the pleasure to come before. Dear old fellow ! I met him some years after in the coach, and re-introduced myself to him, and we had a rare guffaw over the confusion of the bobbies, who caught it again, it seems, right and left from him, when they came back with rueful countenances to say “ the young gent had gone away hearly in the morning.” He gave me leave to fish his water, which I did shortly after with great success. It was a splendid jack water, and I made such a capture of fish out of it

one afternoon as I hardly ever made in my life. I know my back ached with only carrying them a hundred yards or so, and I lost as many as I caught, though there was nothing over 10lb. among them; but I lost one in the same water the next day reputed at 18lb.

CHRISTMAS IN THE FISHERMAN'S SNUGGERY.

“Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round.”—*The Task.*

A FISHERMAN'S SNUGGERY—what is it like? A square-ish room, about 16ft. each way, low rather than lofty, with recesses on either side of the fireplace, and a glazed bookcase in each—one containing a choice collection of books on angling, ancient and modern, and the other a good selection of works upon natural history, botany, geology, and kindred sciences; for your true angler should always have a love for Nature and her secrets, and should study how to unlock them. Below the book-cases are chiffonnières, with cupboards. In one long drawer, with a let-down flap, is contained in various small drawers and pigeon-holes the entire arcana of bait fishing, and in the other of fly fishing. Both are open this Christmas day, and a loving ramble amongst their contents is going on—of which anon. On each side of the fireplace is a gas jet and lamp for the convenience of reading; just under it, hollowed out beside the chimney, are two little cupboards. In one are kept pipes and tobacco—rare old Viennese meerschaums, the carving on which is perfect enough

to make works of art of them, while the colouring, from rich gold deepening down to dusky chocolate, is superb ; fine old Dutch bowls, that Teniers or Ostade might have painted, or, at least, have smoked ; a grand narghilé, resplendent in gold thread, clouded amber, and gems, a present from the Pasha of Manytails ; eccentric carved French briars, wonderful bits of art and bizarre fancy ; fine old clay calumets from the Mohicans and Chippeways ; over the mantelpiece a rack of chillums and tchibouks, with splendid stems of cherry and jasmine wood, fragrant enough for a true believer to smoke when attended by the houris in Mahomed's paradise. In the other cupboard cases of cigars of many brands, but all of the finest—Chicas, Panatelas, Intimidads, little Princesas, and a dozen more—with cheroots of the choicest, the latter bedded in their leaden coffins, and embalmed in green tea. Nothing preserves their flavour and condition like it ; but it does not do to drink the tea after it has been thus used. We once heard of an old lady, a very careful housekeeper, who, not liking to throw away such beautiful-looking tea, as ordered by her master, took a surreptitious cup, and nearly poisoned herself by so doing. Under the cupboards are two little brackets to stand the convenient tumbler on. An open fireplace, with fine old Dutch tiles—none of your Minton's gorgeousness, but fine bulky old Adams and Eves in blue tracery, and nothing else—not even the traditional aprons—with calves like coalheavers' ; and there, too, is that impossible Prodigal, with the husks as big as trusses—how he fed on 'em the mind cannot conceive ; and Joseph in a pit like a small well, out of which he

could have stepped at any moment, and why he didn't was the mystery ; and Lot's wife being turned into the strangest blue salt that ever was seen surely ; and Abraham and the ram ; and Jacob's dream, in which a ten-round ladder reaches to a feather-bed representing the clouds, and cherubs like exaggerated salmon-flies are going up and down without legs —and why they wanted that ladder at all, as the little boy said to the governess, when they had wings, puzzles me quite as much as it did him,—“Why does zem angels have a ladder, Miss Brown, when zem's got wings ; could'nt zem fly ?” he asked. Probably his little sister's suggestion may have had something in it. She, being a bird proprietor and poultry yard frequenter,—“Perhaps zem's moultin, Tommy !” But to return to our tiles. There we have the whole Bible history in blue tiles, each more wonderful, more surprising, and out of drawing than the other. In the fireplace is a grate, which can be taken out, and the andirons used for a wood fire, if preferred. On either side are two comfortable easy chairs, with a small table at hand that can be turned into a reading-desk in a second. All round the room are racks and pegs, upon which favourite rods, nets, gaffs, &c., depend. On one side of the room, opposite the fire, is a divan, with comfortable cushions for lounging, and just above it another gas jet and reading lamp. The window is a large old-fashioned bow, with octangular panes of glass, and looks out through a mass of creepers on a trim lawn decked with beautiful shrubs ; inside the bow stands a small table and a plain Windsor chair. In the table are one or two

well-holes to hold bottles of varnish, liquid wax, &c. ; on the edge of the table a capital vice is fixed, with various mechanical contrivances for fly-making ; a drawer at the end of the table, which stands open, is strewed with spring tweezers and nippers, scissors, files, tinsel, twist, hanks of gut, &c. ; and beside the chair stands a kind of Canterbury, in which are books, containing feathers of all kinds, dubbings various, and silks, chenille, &c., of divers colours, close and ready to the hand of the operator. A few cases of rare English birds and stuffed fish (the captives of the angler's bow and spear), and one or two of Rolfe's and Cooper's pictures, decorate the walls, which are papered with a warm flock paper of brown and red. No curtains help to hide the light from the windows, but a couple of big folding-screens, covered by loving hands with cuts from *Punch*—mostly reminiscences of poor John Leech—stand behind either chair when needed. There is a pleasant smell of camphor, Turkish tobacco, and Russia leather about.

We have retired from the noisy sports of the youngsters to digest our turkey and mincepie with a post-prandial pipe and prose, and are noting various odds and ends. "There," says George, taking a dusty, dingy old salmon fly, past colour or mark of teeth, tied on treble gut, off a hook on the wall, where it hung ; "that is the fly I killed my first salmon with, twenty-five years ago come April next ! Well I remember it. Shall I ever forget it, indeed ? Does anyone ever forget his first salmon ? Aye, aye, it was in the Thurso, in the Linn of Skinnet, as the pool was called then, though it has long been called by another

name, close to where Brawl castle stands now. It's a deadish water, or was just then, for the river was low, and there was not much water. But the Thurso never wants water, except to bring in fresh fish. Once get them in, and it will keep on fishing well for a month or six weeks without a drop of rain. All you want is wind. He wasn't much of a fish, and in the dead water played rather pikeishly, but I got him out at last, quite panting with excitement. He weighed about $10\frac{1}{2}$ lb.; and surely so beauteous a creature never was seen by mortal eyes. I never got tired of looking at him. I killed three more that afternoon, and well I blooded my maiden steel. There it hangs, that good old gaff, broken at the head. That was that lout Archy M'Kay's doing up on the Tay. Archy got drunk one evening, and, coming home, got a cropper over the rocks, and fell with my gaff in his hand. It received, doubtless, a severe blow. At all events, next day, up above Hell Hole, I ran a very heavy fish—30lb. or more—and, after half an hour's brilliant play, brought him round. Archy gaffed him fairly; the fish gave a plunge, and went away (having dislodged the fly) with half of the gaff in his body, while Archy stood like a fool staring at the other half. I was raw, I tell you, siree, for I had had the water for a week, and it was the only clean fish I had hooked that week, the river being full of kelts, and clean fish very few.

"That big landing net? Yes; as you say, what a long handle! By the aid of that long handle my netsman once landed more than I bargained for when we went out. It was a dead baby, pitched into a

deepish pool, with a stone round its neck like a dog. No ; it was never discovered who did it.

“ Where did I get the stuffed otter ? Ah ! that is a good joke. It was trapped by Spots the gauger, up in Donegal. Ha, ha ! Spots used to trap otters and badgers, and all sorts of things, away in the Rosses, which is more water than land, and as much stones as either—though that’s Irish for a bull, I suppose. Well, Spots was on to this otter and another, and set his trap in a lake hard by Dungloe. I went out one morning early to fish this very lake, and, on the way there, I passed near an island where they had poisoned some crows, and I saw a dead wild cat, which I wanted the skin of ; so I made Thady, my gossoon, fist it along. When we came to the lake, as I passed the shore at one end, I noticed the rushes much knocked about, and, going to see what it was, I saw a fine otter drowned and dead in one of Spots’s traps. A good joke occurred to me. I hauled out the trap, took out the otter, and put in the cat, and then we hid ourselves in the heather, and waited the advent of Spots. He wasn’t long ; but, when he came, if you had heard the odd farrago of wonder, rage, and incredulity that he gave vent to, you would have died of laughter. I burst out at last in such a peal, that Spots—”

“ Spotted you.”

“ Just so. But don’t do that again, old fellow, because it’s Christmas day, you know, and really—really. However, after that, Spots always dated events from ‘the time that he caught the wather-cat.’ ”

"That broken top? Yes, that was my favourite double-handed troutng tool. I fished for a week of Sundays, almost, for a big trout, at the back of some houses at Winchester. I do suppose the brute weighed 10lb, or 11lb. There he lay, close under the wall just below, and, by peeping over the garden railings, I could just see him sucking in the comestibles. He had often been hooked, and was mighty wary, and I tried him for weeks with every bait I could think of. At last I tried a cockroach—I had known them take big fish before well; in fact, near a mill, it is one of the very best baits you can use for a big trout. I passed it over him once or twice, but he would not come. At last I passed it so close to him that he clearly got a good sniff of it, and it was irresistible, and he took it like a lamb. Directly I hit him, off he went down stream twenty or thirty yards, then up again, then across to the other side; then he tried a bunch of weeds, but they wouldnt hold him, and he came tumbling and rolling over, as I shortened in line, till he was right under the point of my rod; when, all of a sudden, bethinking himself of a dodge, he bolted up a 10-inch drain right under my feet, smashed the top like a pipe stem, cut the line, and left me outrageous. I smoked two ounces of 'baccy, sir, that afternoon before I could reconcile it.

"What is the story of that broken spinning tackle hanging on the nail? Oh, not very much. Broke in the biggest pike I ever hooked, a 40 or 50 pounder. I got fast in him in Loch Conn, or rather Cullen, near the Pontoon bridge. By Jove, how he did travel! He just cut the reeds down as if they were mowed by a

scythe. I went for a big 'un, so I had a tidy strong line. 'Megorra, Misther F., but he's a baste as big as a corkydile or a halleygaper,' said Patsey, who was peering over the bows, ready to tackle him with a big gaff (which we had out for the occasion) as soon as a chance offered. As we toiled after him, all of a sudden something went wrong; he ran foul of a stump of a tree, or a big lump of peat, or something at the bottom of the lake. Whew! phit! it was all over in a second, and I was minus half a spinning tackle. 'Be jabers! the whale that swalley'd Jonas was just a babby to him,' said Patsey, after several consolations from the big wicker 'three-pint.' Somehow those big fellows do, nine times in ten, give you leg-bail, or fin-bail rather.

"You are looking at that old creel with the bottom out. Ha, Ha! That was a good joke. Jack Whirter and I had a bet of a dinner who would kill the biggest weight of fish one day, when we were in Sutherlandshire, on the —. Jack was a smart hand—a very smart hand—and, while I was fishing the main river, Jack came upon a small brook that had spated from a night's rain, and, chancing on some worms, he went up the brook, and made a great take by a great fluke, while I, fishing in the main river lower down, had a fair basket, but nothing extra—Jack came back beaming. The trap was to call for us at a certain bridge, and take us back to dinner. While on the bridge, waiting, I wanted to weigh Jack's take, but he would not allow me, wishing to do the triumphant when we arrived at the inn. Very good! The trap came up, and we got in, with Jones and Crawfull, who

had been fishing higher up ; but there was no room for our creels inside, so we strapped them on the hinder rail. Now Master Jack was a wee bit of a skin-flint ; his soul loved cheap lines, and he would put up with any amount of tangling and inconvenience rather than pay a good price for a good thing. Cheap flies at 1s. 6d. a dozen he also adored, no matter how the hooks broke or the tying came to pieces. His waders were always patched to a marvel, and his creel was a caution. Yet Jack Whirter was a city swell, and with thousands a year. As we jogged home, I had my arm over the back of the trap, and, most inadvertently, my hand embraced the bottom of Jack Whirter's creel, and I felt the head of a trout nearly protruding through a broken spar in the basket-work, and, as I was fumbling about it curiously, the trout (quite a small one) oozed through and dropped in the road. Had I lost my bet ? Ha ! an idea seized me. He wouldn't weigh at the bridge ! So I gently detached another spar of the basket-work, and then I looked up at the stars with an angelic smile, and took them into my confidence, and we winked at one another as we heard a soft flop on the dusty road behind every now and then. When we got home, after the usual questions and answers, 'How stands the bet ?' was the cry. 'Oh, that I won, of course !' said Whirter. 'Well, I don't know about "of course,"' says I, 'but we'll settle that point by weighing in.' 'All right,' said Jack, and out he went to fetch his creel. I brought mine in with me, and the scales were got ready for the match. 'Halloo !' we heard from the doorway ; 'Halloo ! Why, what's this ? My creel is

as light as a feather!' and in came Jack with an empty creel in his hand—at least, there was only one small trout left in it—and with half the bottom out. There was a roar at that, I tell you. Jack stood, looking like a fool, while Jones, an aggravating chap, said, ‘Ah, I always told you that those cheap creels were not to be trusted.’ ‘Cheap! Why it’s worn out ages ago,’ said Crawfull, fingering the bottom. ‘Well, let’s weigh in,’ said I, innocently. Jack had to pay for the dinner, and it was years before I told him the whole joke, but by that time he had improved somewhat, and that is the basket.

“That old boot with the rent in it! Ah, don’t mention it! I was fishing the Erne, on the lower Bank of Ireland. The water was a trifle high; I overstepped myself, slipped over a round stone, and in I went a header. In two minutes, in that tremendous stream, my flint would have been fixed; but, just as I disappeared, and only my boots were to be seen, Terry made a cast at me, and by good luck the gaff got hold of my boot. That is the hole it made; it ruined the boot, but saved my life. Ah! when the water flashed over my eyes and into my ears, I began to feel queerish! What a lot of escapes one gets in salmon fishing, to be sure! Never mind; here’s success to it, anyhow. Pipe out, eh? Try that Latakia, and one of the chillums—that cherry one with the silver mounting—it will, as Mr. Quilp said, make you feel like the Grand Turk; and ring that bell for the coffee. Does the pipe go well? Like ‘Paradise and the Peri,’ eh? All right, old fellow.

“Yes, I see you looking at those old books. Truly,

there they are. Old Leonard Mascall's 'Booke of Fishing with Hook and Line, and all other instruments thereunto belonging,' &c., &c., printed in black letter by John Wolfe, in London, in 1590, sixty-three years before his next-door neighbour, dear old Izaak's 'Complete Angler.' There they are, the whole five editions, in good preservation, and the original binding too; worth 30*l.* and more in the market any day. There, too, on the other side, is old Gervase Markham's 'Country Contentments,' with its quaint notions on fishing, only forty years anterior to Izaak. There they all are, up to the days of Blaine, Hawker, Ronalds, Ephemera, and other moderns, over whom, my dear boy, we will draw a veil. Don't look so hard at the bottom of that tumbler—I don't mean you. But now there's Jane with the coffee. Just spring that night bolt, will you?—I never allow people to come bursting in on me without due notice, and some I don't let in at all—it's a bore to get up and let them in; so a night bolt is invaluable. And now, just one pipe more. Maraschino or Chartreuse? Chartreuse; all right, my boy. And then let us join the ladies with forfeits, and Sir Roger de Coverley; and I trust you have enjoyed your Christmas afternoon's pipe in the angler's snuggery."

ST. MAYFLY.

“Now is the month of maying.”—*Old Madrigal.*

THERE be many saints in the calendar—saints to whom good men in past days have worthily paid veneration and praise—saints who did good for their fellow creatures—saints who did good for themselves, and saints by haphazard, who did good for no one in particular—saints good, bad, and indifferent; for all sorts of individuals, good, bad, and indifferent, have canonised the objects of their adoration thus, and these objects have been muchly diversified in pattern. With some, even St. Sathanas himself has found a place, and there can be little doubt that, whether his saintship be publicly acknowledged now, he is none the less an object of adoration to vast multitudes to whom even the world and the flesh are insufficient for their spiritual requirements. The right of canonisation was much more freely exercised by past generations than by the present one, when subjects of veneration are not greatly in request. Utility is the saint we go for nowadays. But fishermen are privileged persons; we have ways and beliefs of our own, and we have dogmas and creeds of our own—and, if so, why not saints of our own? And that being so, who is to

quarrel with Saint Mayfly ? who is most assiduously worshipped with profound devotion by a large crowd of worshippers, who once a year celebrate to he, she, or it, from a week to a fortnight's festival—who is to quarrel with it ? I repeat.

“ If any speak, for him have I offended ;
What none ! then none have I offended.”

So here goes to celebrate his festival once again.

“ Don't put me on the committee, for I shall be out of town for a fortnight. The Mayfly is just coming up.”

“ I am going down to Stockbridge, and have given orders that no business letters shall be sent to me for the next ten days.”

These sentences were really uttered in my hearing—one by a prominent member of Parliament, in reference to a committee on a rather popular bill ; the other by one of the wealthiest bankers of the City of London. “ The Mayfly was up ;” the saturnalia of the fly-fisher was at hand ; its devotees were about to disperse to all parts of the kingdom, from Canterbury to Westmeath. For the feast of St. Mayfly is in its way, among the patrons of the rod, a fair contrast to the feast of St. Grouse among the votaries of the trigger. How many among us have, as the last weeks in May approached, anxiously looked for that dirty scrawl which announces “ William Tipper's respects to Mustr. ——, Esq., and I igspecks as the vly ool be up 'bout Toosday next, the 27th as is ;” and “ William Tipper's 'umble dooty to Mr. ——, Esq., and I'll be at the station with the cart,” and so forth !

Who that saw the eminent M.P., or the keen, shrewd Croesus of Lombard-street, poring over, or holding up to the light, curious fabrications, composed of Egyptian geese and wood-duck feathers, not forgetting the attendant sauce piquant in the shape of a hook, by the hour together for days before this event, would thiuk that they could afford to waste their valuable time like this, in turning over an old fly book or box, examining colours, testing hooks, &c., and writing off expresses to Ogden, Hammond, Farlow, or Bowness, for the best relays of the choicest “floaters,” “according to the inclosed pattern”? Floaters, be it known to the uninitiated, have nothing to do with persons engaged in manufacturing companies—as, from the daily occupations of those concerned, might perhaps be surmised—but are merely an imitation of the ephemera or Mayfly, compounded of feathers that will float upon the surface of the water for some time, just like the natural insect, to the exceeding bamboozlement and detriment of the fish. And how that expected packet is looked for! Emmas or Paraguay dividends, or whatever may be the medium of such fortunate conditions in the commercial world, don’t create a tithe of the interest. Mr. Smith and Mr. Pain, the junior clerks in the secretary’s office, can’t think what possesses the governor to be so anxious about the advent of that little square cardboard box which is hourly expected by the post. He has asked twenty times if that packet has not come yet, and he was not half so anxious for particulars when the stoppage of the Big Bumbaze Bank occurred, by which they had been hit for at least fifty thou’.

And when the packet does come, too, on the afternoon before the 27th, Smith declares that “the governor tore off the envelope, looked inside with amazing eagerness, and, most surprisin’ to relate, after all there was nothing—he gives you his word—but a ‘eap of feathers inside ; and yet the governor seemed that glad that his voice was quite cheering and changed as he ordered the porter to run for a cab directly, and to put up his luggage, and that long japanned tin can, labelled ‘ Plans and Sections of the Random Railway,’ but which had something inside like ‘ sticks,’ being hard and heavy.” Mr. Pain, who comes from Derbyshire, opines that “ perhaps it’s rods in the case, and the packet was flies, in which case the governor’s goin’ a-fishin’, and that’s all about it, and he wishes he was only goin’ too, blowed if he doesn’t, for he’s tired of bricks and mortar.”

But see the grave, rugged-browed, saturnine man of business next day on the river side, a hundred miles away from Lombard-street, far down in Dampshire ! You would not know him ; indeed, his very nearest business friends would not, unless they were also fishermen. The heavy, plodding, serious gait is exchanged for a quick, springy step, as if he had never done anything but walk heather and river swamp all his life ; and where is the solemn suit of business black too, and the cambric tie—livery alike of Plutus and of waiters ? Where, indeed ? Can that gentleman in the loose tweed Norfolk jacket, and — no ! — yes ! — actually knickerbockers and worsteds, with really very tidy calves and a neat ankle (for his age) inclosed in them, be the great Mr. Blank, of the great firm of Blank,

Stumpup, and Quills? As surely he is, as that that is William Tipper carrying the basket and landing net behind him, and presenting his “umble dooty” in all sorts of ways. And don’t imagine that our cockney banker is a muff by any manner of meaus on the river-side. Not he; whatever his hand finds to do, he does it well and thoroughly, and he can put out twenty-five yards of line with a floating Mayfly at the end as straightly and lightly as can young Fallowfield, the sporting squire’s son, whose house you may see on the hill yonder some five miles off, and who does nothing but fish, shoot, hunt, and brag from year’s end to year’s end.

The scene is a delightful one, and well calculated to make one forget everything but the business on hand. Here are green water meadows, with purling rivulets bisecting them, and great yellow buttercups shining like golden stars in the midst of the verdure; beautiful hanging woods, with here and there a break of lawn-like turf, and a gentleman’s seat behind in the distance; close before, the river bank, beset with flowers of every hue, and which, if they were but rare, would be sedulously cultivated by florists; here and there the river bends and widens, and reeds and sedges whisper their secrets to each other. Occasionally an alder or an old pollard stoops over the bank, beneath which the stream sparkles and eddies along in the sun-light, over swaying water weeds of a hundred strange and beautiful patterns, broken now and again with patches of silvery gravel. The scent of distant up-land hay, with nearer May-bush and honeysuckle, mingled with crushed water-celery and wild horse-

mint, fills the nostrils with delicious natural perfume. The lark roams higher and higher and higher yet, till it is lost in the sky, though its voice still peals downwards in a constant ripple of melody ; the blackbird whistles in every little grove or plantation ; the sedge-warbler twitters and chirrups its low, sweet song ; and, blending with all, the reeds and river rustle and gurgle in chords of harmony. The delicate ephemerae flutter upwards from every curl and dimple on the stream. Look carefully along the surface of the water, and you will see every second or two something which looks like a horse-bean come floating down. It has only just reached the surface as it catches your eye, and a wonderful transformation, so rapid as to be almost like a conjuring trick, takes place. That is the larva of the Mayfly, or greendrake (*Ephemera vulgata*). It has just risen from the bottom, intent upon launching itself into a new world—a new existence. Hitherto, its place of residence has been the water, and it has lived an active and very predaceous existence among the caverns and oozes of the river bottom and banks, hunting and devouring small insects, worms, and even fishes, with a rapacity which is marvellous in so apparently harmless a creature. Look closer at it, however ; observe that pair of sharp, curved, pointed shears with which it is furnished, and with which it seizes and cuts up creatures even of its own size ; observe that singular and beautiful fringe along the side, which, when it is in the water, is in constant motion—that forms the gills, and by its constant action aerates the water which passes through them. It is a wonderfully

contrived insect, and, perhaps, in all nature there is nothing more curious. But now the season of its change has come, after a two year's residence in the water. It rises to the surface, its back above the water, and the tail part of the body hanging down; no sooner does it catch your eye than—"crack!" the skin across the back bursts, and up pop the two wings upright from the water, and, in another second, it is up and away, dancing in another world, and living purely in another element: as it does so, a big trout rushes at it, but he is too late, and gets only the empty case, the exuviae, for his pains—and that is what makes the trout so eager at this time, when feeding on the larva, for they know that, when these come to the surface, if they are not quick, the insect will be away. But now the rise thickens, and the flies, in troops and squadrons, spring aloft, and sport in the air in crowds, or float on the stream, thousands strong, while the big yellow trout—three and four pounders frequently—suck them in quietly under the banks, or come up with a rush and a splash in the mid-stream, which may be seen full half a mile away.

"That's a big chap, your honour," says William Tipper, deferentially, and pointing to the stump of an old split-up pollard on the opposite bank, where a fish is taking every fly that passes, and with as little disturbance in the water as though he were—but a wee sprattie of half an ounce. The line is swept to and fro a few times to dry and straighten it, and, as a gentle summer breeze softly ruffles the surface, away goes the deceitful imitation, and lights like-

thistledown, or like the real fly, some two feet above the victim. Gracefully it sails down to him on the surface, with two other real flies in company. "Now it is over him, sir ! and there he rises !" "Beautifully struck, sir !" and away rushes the "wee sprattie," jumping out of the water with two mad leaps, and displaying the golden, crimson-spotted sides of a noble four-pounder, who, after trying all his strength and artifice to escape in vain, is at last led gently into the landing-net upon a shelving ledge of chalk some twenty yards down stream. "And to think of his pickin' out your artificial from between the two naturals !" says William Tipper, blowing out and drying the fly. "I never see such a thing; well, they are beauties, surely, and as like as natur ! Them wings, sir, when you hold 'em up to the light, is the very colour to a moral."

"Ah, Bill, and the dye that they're dyed with is an invention of my own;" whereat the holiday-making banker looks as proud, and a deal more pleased, than he would if he had invented a new and successful scheme of currency, while he lights a choice Partaga, and sips a drop of sherry from his flask, although it wants two hours to luncheon time, and in London tobacco crosses not his lips till 10 p.m., and sherry never before lunch. He is renewing his youth. Care is cast to the winds. Business he will not attend to at all: for he jokingly told his nephew, who is fishing half a mile above, and who ventured some remark on the fall in Anglo-Columbians as they came out into the garden after breakfast, "I've left it all to Stumpup, and I won't read a letter for a fortnight,

for we don't come down to the river side, my boy,
to 'renovare' our 'dolorems;' so no more of that,
'an thou lovest me.' But try these Partagas, and
call Bill Tipper."

CATCHING TARTARS.

Agro qui statuit meo,
Te triste lignum.—HORACE.

My friend Crayon is perhaps the most genial man of my acquaintance. Devoted to art and angling, he has wandered east, west, north, and south, with his rod in one hand and his pencil in the other. He is one of the best fellows to smoke a pipe with I know, being full of anecdotes of his experiences, many of them very good, and which he tells with a quiet, dry humour that is perfectly irresistible. From his wallet —which is like Touchstone's brain, "with strange places crammed with observation"—he drew the following the other evening, while P. and myself were indulging in a soothing weed. I thought it so good that I took a note of it :

" My father used to fish in the Lea just below Tottenham Mills, and he and his friend B. used to get some capital sport with the roach there at times. There was one particular swim, a big hole, where the roach, when "on," were often severe, and many a heavy creel B. and himself took away from this hole. It was pretty much open water in those days, though well stocked, in spite of a good deal of irregular fishing. The bargees sometimes, who used to be dreadful

poachers in those days, took heavy toll as they passed this water, and amongst them was one who was my father's special pet aversion, and who always laid himself out to skin this particular hole. It was just about as aggravating a thing, you know, as could happen to two fellows, who worked hard usually, and couldn't get a holiday every day, when, after setting themselves to work and baiting a hole carefully for hours, till they got the fish on, then, just as they were reaping the reward of their skill, to see a barge come along, with a bargee standing ready on the deck with a huge fifteen or twenty yard cast net, gathered up ready for a throw, and then, just as the barge passed, to see it whirled out into the air, taking in pretty well all the best of the hole. The beggar always knew, too, by instinct whereabouts the ground bait was, you know; and then to witness the net hauled up, with pretty well a bushel of splendid roach in it, and to see the rascal grinning and jeering, with all their take and their day's sport in his net, and to know that there was no more sport for them that day, and they might as well go home. It was too dreadful altogether, and would have made a meek man cantankerous. My father was a moral man, and not given to strong language; but B. did say, that, upon one occasion, when they were having some extra good sport, he went so far as to say 'blow it,' and to wish that that bargeman might come to some misfortune.

"One day, after a peculiarly aggravating scene of this sort, 'B.', said my father, 'this won't do any longer.' 'It won't,' said B. 'It is unbearable, it is abominable, it is fiendish; but what can we do?'

‘ Well,’ said my father; ‘ I’ve an idea.’ He had sometimes, and, thereupon, they put their heads together and talked it out. They knew pretty well about the time the barge was likely to return, and, the day before it was expected, they borrowed a big punt from the man at the mill, got a huge cask, and stuck it all over with tenter hooks, filled it up with gravel and brick bats till it weighed about half a ton, dropped down to the edge of the swim, and shoved it overboard. Down went the cask with a mighty plunge, and found its resting place just on the edge of the swim, out of the way of the floats, my father and B. chuckling cherubically. They then baited the swim, and went to their inn with the placid and virtuous resignation bestowed by a good conscience at peace with itself and all mankind. The next day they began their fishing. Sport was pretty good, and in time grew better. There was a slight dimple over the spot where the cask lay, and ever as they came near it they got a bite or an offer; the cask formed a capital skirmishing ground and a hiding place for the roach, and they seemed to approve of it highly.

“ They were just having their bread and cheese, and sitting looking at the swim, when the barge hove in sight.

“ ‘ Here she is,’ said B.

“ ‘ Aye, and there he stands with the casting net all ready,’ said my father. ‘ He! he! won’t he be surprised?’

“ ‘ Ha, ha! what a lark!’ roared B., with his mouth full of bread and cheese.

" On came the barge ; she was soon abreast of them, and with a gentle sweep and a graceful bend the bargee let go ; the net was spread like a huge circular parachute, and disappeared in foam beneath the crystal wave, well over the dimple aforesaid. With a highly satisfied grin the bargee looked at the anglers as he took hold of the line.

" ' Got summut this cast, I expect,' he said, with a confident nod and a chuckle.

" ' Shouldn't wonder if you have,' said my father, drily.

" The line tightened. ' Hallo ! wots this ? wots this here ? I say, wot the dash, dash, dash, dash.' The barge still went on, just as if there was no cask there. My father said that he never admired the calm dignity and resistless power of a barge so much as he did on this occasion. The bargee hung on to the end of the line till his eyes nearly started out of his head. There was a mighty strain, a sudden snap, and the bargee disappeared backwards into the hold of the barge, nearly fracturing the base of his skull (only a bargee is somewhat nigger-built in that respect), and with only a line, with a few threads of string at the end of it, left in his hands. I have heard my father and B. say that they had heard some tall swearing in the course of their lives, but that that bargee would have taken the rag off the most fluent and profane Yankee among the mining population of Colorado county, U.S. He raved and swore, as Mark Twain says, till the atmosphere was perfectly blue. If he had eaten the original puppy pie, and never found it out till he came to the tails, he could not have exceeded it till he vanished round a bend in the

river. They often saw him after, but only in the distance, for he usually retired to the cabin when he came in sight of the spot—as my father said—to meditate, doubtless, on the mutability of human affairs, and to muse on some particular form of imprecation which might be calculated at length to bring balm to his bruised spirit. My father and B. went on with their fishing, and had a capital day's sport, and many more capital ones in the same swim afterwards, for they never took the old cask out, and for some years it was better than any number of water bailiffs to the bargee's hole."

This story drew out another of like character, of course, from P.; thus : "I don't know what the connection is between barging or boating and bad language, but they certainly do somehow hang together forcibly ; I can't think why. It's a great pity though. When I first came to live at A. there was an old chap there who wrought diligently in the netting and night lining interests ; netting had not yet been abolished. He was known as the foulest mouthed man in the place, and this was no light distinction ; for the place used then to bear the reputation of being, as poor old Jemmy Hall termed it, the 'worst langwidgest place on the Thames.' Old 'Top Tile,' as he was called, in consequence of his always wearing a tall black beaver hat, as a sacrifice to respectability, was, besides being dreadfully foul-mouthed, an abominable old hypocrite with it, and sought to impress society with the simple goodness and kindness of his nature, while indulging in his weakness for imprecatory formulæ in this wise. One

day I was lying down behind a bush on the bank when old Top Tile and his grandson, a lad of ten, came along in a punt; as they went along, old T. T. called to his grandson, ‘ You Halick, what the, &c., &c., ‘ave you dashed dashed done with that ere dashed, &c.’d lave net? I’m strong adjectived if I—’ Just at this moment a boat full of ladies and gentlemen came by, and T. T. continued in a whine, which was an inexpressibly funny contrast; ‘ As I’m always a tellin’ o’ you, my dear boy, why don’t you do as your parents tells ye; they haven’t got nothin’ but your good at ’art, my dear boy, and—(the boat being now out of earshot)—‘ Dash your imprecated limbs and other faculties! if I don’t,’ &c., &c., ‘ your,’ &c., &c. This amiable old Christian used to net a particular bough and old pollard which shaded a deep hole at the bottom of my garden, just under a little window in my summer house. It was a very favourite place with me of a summer evening; and, though I did not care to fish it much, I could peep out and see the big chub, roach, and bream playing up their scaly games down in the shadowy depths below; and it was really a most interesting study. Well, this disgusting old Top Tile, as sure as there was a bit of a flood and a dozen or two of fish got under the tree, used to come with his beastly net and catch them out. I got so aggravated about it at last, that I collected stores for his discomfiture. There was “ item ” the very rusty remains of an old broken kitchen range, weighing some hundredweights; two or three old butter tubs hooped with iron hoops, well tentered, and filled with rough concrete. Item, the remains of a ponderous

waterlogged bait corfe, which I had filled with brick-bats; and five or six of the very biggest brick burrs I could procure anywhere. These I had collected and conveyed to the spot furtively. It had been raining for some days, and the river began to thicken; so, knowing from experience that my friend T. T. would probably be out early next morning, I borrowed a punt over night, and, with the assistance of my man, who gardened for and punted me about, we dropped this little lot into the depths most judiciously. The next morning I was up with the lark, and in the summer house, with the window open about an inch. I hadn't been there a quarter of an hour when old T. T. and his grandson, and a friend who punted for him, came along, T. T. taking the rough edge off the morning air with a cheerful and warming dose of strong epithets. He had just bought a new net, and the maker had not hung the leads or corks or the walling, I forget which, to his liking. "'Ave a shy at old Cockshot's summer 'ouse?' asked the friend suggestively, by which elegant appellation they designated me, if you please. 'You may be somethinged well sure o' that,' said T. T. 'It do haggravate the old &c., &c., so to see us a-doin' of it. He-he, haw-haw,'" and there was a laugh. 'Tarry a while, my infants,' thought I from the inside. The aggravation will be otherwise bestowed this morning and the laugh reversed, or I'm greatly mistaken. In three or four minutes the net was run round the bushes and fixed, the powsing pole dashed into every hole and corner, amid reflections as to 'wot old Cockshot 'd think of that'? with general remarks, more keen than kindly

or elegant, as to my supposed condition, at that early period of the morning. Presently the pole was put by, the rypeck pulled up, and they began to gather the net in. They gathered in about three yards, when there was an exclamation of surprise, and even of annoyance. It became evident that the new net had ‘took ‘old o’ suthin’ ; and as time and tugging progressed, it became more clearly evident that this dashed somethinged ‘suthin’,’ &c., did not mean to give way, and that it would be requisite, if they did not mean to stop there for ever, for something else to give way. I draw a veil over the scene which ensued ; I would not wish to describe it. Of that new net they took home, I believe, the whole of the cork rope, and some of the lead line, and perhaps half the walling and bunt ; and they left behind them imprecations enough to have sunk an ironclad. All I can say is that if the ‘recording angel,’ as in my Uncle Toby’s case, had really to write them down, he had his work cut out, and must have catalogued many of the items as ‘ditto repeated.’ ‘Cockshot’s pollard’ was an awfully sore subject with old Top Tile for many a long day.”

UNDER THE BOUGHS.

“Flow on, flow on, brave river, midst homes and altars free,
Inspire the poet’s glowing song, the patriot’s eulogy.”

Old Father Thames.

NOW AND THEN.

“THEN.”

I HAVE put together here two articles—one representing what chub fishing under the boughs used to be twenty years ago, before the introduction of steam launches and campers on the Thames, and another which represents rather favourably than otherwise what it is now. And if one should bewail the past it will hardly be surprising.

At the present time (from twelve to twenty years ago) there is no pleasanter amusement for the angler than chub fishing with the fly on the Thames. In fact, there is no more agreeable occupation for the angler on the Thames at any season of the year. Dropping quietly down the river just within a long cast of the bank, he sits in the bow of the boat and casts towards the shore, under every bough that looks likely, and against every overhanging bank where chub may be supposed to lie; sometimes taking one, two, or more fish, sometimes passing on without a rise

—still dropping steadily on down the stream without let or hindrance. He never needs to go back, or to fish over the same ground twice, if his boatman be properly up to his work. It is the luxury of fishing; and while the sport is lively enough to keep the faculties well employed, there is still time between whilsts to note and enjoy all the beauties of the scenery, the brilliant weather—for bright sunny weather is the best for chubbing—the sparkling stream and ever-changing views. On we float past pollards and withies, picturesque rushy aits and islets, or green grassy banks fringed now with tall flags, and now with masses of flowering plants of every variety and hue, set in a wide margin of broad flat, lily leaves, gemmed with their topaz blossom. Now we drift slowly past some peaceful primitive little village, whose white cottages nestle on to the stream, looking in the distance like a flock of wild swans about to plunge in. Now some picturesque little church peeps timidly out, dropped and lost there by somebody in a hurry hundreds of years ago, and so forgotten while it grew, and still keeps on growing into a mossy and ivy-clad old age—a marvel of beauty and antiquity. Gazing upon it in a sort of reverie, fancy tells us of the half-hidden half-forgotten tombs within of the good knights who in troublous times held watch and ward over the fords in their towers hard by—now mouldered into dust like them, or possibly converted into ignoble uses in barns, stables, or pigsties; for to many folks the most interesting ruin is but a handy and fortuitous stone quarry. What is left of them? a name perhaps, and yonder worm-eaten banner staff,

still hanging from the wall by rusty iron fastenings, all but eaten up by age, and from which the silken fabric, borne before them in many a stout *mélée* and deadly fight, when courage and fidelity won its fit meed, has long, long since dropped away piecemeal into dust and forgetfulness. Or haply, perchance, there is a tomb still preserved—the sarcophagus of the good Baron Geoffrey de Hitemhard, and Dame Alison, his wife, who repose in effigy of time-discoloured marble on the top, draped in the (to us) strange and ungraceful garments of the period, with their hands piously folded *in precatis*, and their toes turned up *secundum artem* (of the sculptor), surrounded by twelve impossibilities, looking more like twelve Chinese josses than anything else, and all in sculptured marble, too, representing the six sons and six daughters of the good old Baron and Dame Alison. Visions, too, glance on us of beautiful old screening in carved oak, broken down and stowed away in some recondite and musty hole, with fragments of stained glass windows covered with dust which hides tints that we have long lost the art to produce, fragments of rusty armour, heads of rare old gargoyle, fingers and toes, relics of saints and noted sinners, and fifty other treasures beyond price, but held in little account by the rural churchwardens of the place. And hardly has a glimpse of these things passed across our mind when the oar dips languidly, and the church slips out of sight, and we open possibly upon the old baronial hall of the descendants of the doughty Baron and Dame Alison ; for the old family, though shorn of its glories somewhat, still hold their own with rare old British bull-

dog tenacity. For the Hitemhards had always a great faculty in holding on, as their motto “*nunquam relinquo*” indicates. They are a race which I pray Heaven may long keep from dying out in dear old England. Long may they live in bower and hall ! For though

The good knight *is* dust,
And his sword *is* rust,
And his soul *is* with the saints, I trust,

his spirit has not quite died, and I hope never will die, out amongst us. It will be a bad thing for us when we begin to lose faith in our Hitemhards. Yonder stands the mansion, half hidden by grand trees, some of which are coeval almost with the original Sir Geoffrey himself. Many a good and bad time has the old house seen ; Noll's Hardheads and Ironsides had their work cut out when bold Sir Arthur Hitemhard held his own for God and his king. But Noll was too many for him, as well as for a good many others like him ; and though stout Sir Arthur held out till he hadn't a cartridge or a crust left, he was forced to yield to superior numbers at last, and to fly the country for a time. The Hitemhards, with King Charles, however, got their own again in time, and the old mansion was restored. But it is shut slowly and lingeringly out of sight by an intervening point, and we open upon the grand palace of Sir Tomkins Snooksbury—*the* Sir Tomkins Snooksbury—the man who made such a fortune, you know, during the Crimean war by selling rotten boots and weevilly biscuits to our gallant soldiers. Mercy on us ! how the place does glitter and glare at us ! what glass and gilding, to be

sure ! And the lawn ! Dear me ! why, it looks as if Sir T. S. employed 365 gardeners, all with a mowing machine apiece, daily to keep it in order. The Snooksburys look down on their neighbours the Hitemhards, and overbear them in fifty ways with their superior wealth. But the Snooksburys, although they did buy the Hitemhard borough of Wabblesworth hard by, over the head of the old family—thanks to the treachery of little Drivlet, the family lawyer, who hoped to get all the Snooksbury business—won't be gentlefolk yet for two or three generations, by which time it is to be hoped they will have subsided as they rose ; while the Hitemhards will still be gentlemen, wherever they may be.

The king may make a *bloated knight*,
An *alderman* and a' that ;
But a *gentleman's* beyond his might,
Gude faith, he mauna fa' that.

“ By Jove ! there was a good fish rose under that willow by the summer-house ! Give her a touch with your right, Tom, and I'll be within reach of him. So—that's nearer. Again. Ha ! that's over him, and —there, I have him ! It's no use fighting for that old root, my good fellow, out you come.” And I haul out into the stream a fat four-pound chub, who is soon transferred to the boat. “ There's another or two at the lower end, Tom, I'm sure ; there's bound to be. Let her drop a yard or two. That's better. Hold her there.”

“ Hy ! you vagabond ; what the—&c., &c., &c.—are you doing there ? Do you know you are trespassing,

fellow? What's your name, you scoundrel? I'll summons you, by Jingo, I will. Who the—&c., &c.—are you? Do you hear?"

"Old Snooks himself, by all that's *un-righteous*—an old ruffian! Claims to have the right of fishing, I hear, all along this bank for a mile, though he has no more right to it than the parish beadle has. Had he spoken *me* fair, I'd have spoken *him* fair; but as it is—half a yard more, Tom; that's better—that's over him, aye, and into him, too. Now old Snooks will be furious—ha! ha! Who am I? Well, what's that to you? What am I doing? Why, don't you see I'm fishing, and what's more, I'm catching 'em. Landing net, Tom. That's it; quite a pair for the other one. Bravo! There's another or two yet."

About this time Snooksbury becomes inarticulate from rage, and looks as if he'd have an apoplectic fit; unfortunately for his descendants, he doesn't, but calls to him two stout serving men, Jems and Willum, who jump into a boat in the most reckless and daring manner, and come up to take our names, or our boat if they can, or to do divers doughty deeds according as the defendants permit them; whereupon I lay down my rod and take up a handy rypeck, and Tom seizes a boat hook, and things begin to look serious for friends Jems and Willum. As to taking our names, the thing is an absurdity, and it ends in a jollying match, in which, as we know something about Snooks and his lot, and they know nothing of us, we get much the best of it of course, while old Snooks shakes his fist, and stamps, and roars, and nearly has another apoplectic fit on the bank. As they can do nothing

else, the boat is rowed and splashed all over the water, and the water thoroughly disturbed. This riles us, and I give Snooks a little bit of *my* mind—perhaps a big bit would be more accurate. That boat came to grief somehow some weeks after, and was found staved and water-logged some miles down the river, and I hear that old Snooks is having a long, iron-bound, bronze-moulded boat house built. As for us, we drift quietly away, while Tom, with that trenchant wit which Thames fishermen mostly possess, hurls sundry queries at Snooks as to the price of rotten shoes and weevilly biscuits.

"How will Culham pollards be, Tom?" "Just in right order, sir; I was past 'em last week, and the water was then a trifle high for 'em, but it's fell since then, and now is all right." "Here we are, then." And we approach a long row of pollards standing over the bank, under which we know many old fat chub delight to congregate; so we put ourselves into position. The big fly hurtles through the breaks in the foliage, and falls far under the shade, and "gob and gob—plop, plop!" The big chub come up to their death one after another, until, by the time we have reached the end of the pollards, eight or ten good fish have been added to the spoil. Then we drop on for a few miles, now stopping to try some trusty bush or some clay bank and cover, which we know of old to hold good fish, and so on to Clifton Lock, and there we discourse the lock man, who is an old friend and ally. We duly liquor him up, and present him with the customary wad of Cavendish, a supply of which, for eleemosynary purposes, I always take with me;

and, having gained all the information we require, and heard all the gossip from him, we drop on, now stopping at another favourite bush, and now at a well-known bank, and pitching the “silver turkey” well over them ; now hauling out a good one ; then haply losing (as one nearly always does) the fish of the day, from some unforeseen inadvertence. At length we reach our dining-room. The boat plunges in amongst some bushes ; the arching trees overhead make a delightful shade. The boat is tied up, and on the grass turf our lunch is spread. In the twinkling of a bedpost or a chub rod—whichever you like, good reader—a plump roast fowl and a hand of cold pickled pork or a knuckle of ham (again whichever you like) reposes on the ground, and a pint bottle of good dry “fiz” is dropped into the cool water. Let it be of the best and purest vintage of champagne, and not cheap. If there is a thing I set my face against it is cheap liquors, they are always nasty, and I have a weakness for treating my stomach *now* like a gentleman. He was a careless dog, I allow, in days gone by, and did not much heed what he dropped into, or rather what was dropped into him. “It was all the same to Sam !” But somehow, with age and calm reflection one gets to think more about these things, and that domestic demon or good angel, as the case may be, “digestion,” calls for far more serious attention than it used to do. As for Tom, he is in clover with that gallon of cooper he laid in at starting, and a wad of bacon fit to astonish a Gaul, and he leans back in the boat opposite to me in an attitude of lazy rapture. “Pop.” Ah-h-h ? Tingle-tingle, glug-

glug ! Delicious, 'pon my word ! Another wing ? Well, no. A merry thought, then ? Ye-es, that's just the thing, &c. I feel like a giant refreshed, and now for the pleasant half-hour, not that the last one has been at all unpleasant—by no means ; but out comes the old meerschaum, and H. and O. Wills to wit ; the smoke curls upwards in a lazy coil, and I regard it with dreamy complacency ; puff, puff, puff. If only Julia Montflathers, now, hadn't married that beast Jack Strangways, of the Redundancy Office ; or if Jack hadn't come to that pic-nic at Beulah Spa ; and if the present Mrs. —— hadn't been—— Dear me ! “ Ah-h-h ! Snawk, snort, aw-wk ! ” Hallo, God bless me ! what's that ? That brute Tom, with no more sentiment than a pig, gone to sleep again, like Pickwick's fat boy, with the last chunk of bacon between his unclosed jaws, and his pipe beside him. Well, well, poor fellow, he was up at four this morning, and had a long row to be with me in time ; but—“ Now, Tom ; come along, wake up ! ” and in ten minutes everything is cleared away and packed, and we are out in the stream again, floating away down past bush and scaur, green bank and willow, village church, ruined abbey, old hall, and mansion of the *nouveaux riches*, while the sparkling, ever-changing stream keeps murmuring the old refrain,

Men may come, and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

And if the stream doesn't murmur it, I do, so it is all the same ; until evening falls, and Mrs. Chipperchild's charming little inn—where the sheets do smell of

lavender, and the kitchen more appropriately of broiling beef steaks, or bacon and eggs and coffee—receives us, while half a hundred-weight, or even a whole one, as I have known, of fine chub, from $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. to 4lb. or 5lb. each, are duly distributed by Tom to the village worthies. Among them Tom is a personage, mark you; and when he is established behind his yard of clay beside the ingle nook in the big fireplace, he “lets no dog bark,” but, whether the subject be fishing, philosophy, or politics, lays down the law in a way that admits of no dispute. But a short time ago I heard him discoursing on the war. Waving the smoke aside by the point of his pipe, of which he makes great use in furtherance of his oratory, Thomas thus: “Now this here Boney, ye know, he’s like the hold Boney, he is. Once a Boney, always a Boney, I says. He’s a goin’ into them ‘ere Proosians like a thousand of brick, he is, that’s wot he’s a goin’ to do. He aint forgot Waterloo, he aint, nor Bloocher neither, and he’s a goin’ to square that ‘ere account; and them metreorloses, mind you, aint invented for nothink, and that ‘ere Beesmark, or Beeswax, or whatever his name be, he’s got to look out, he hes.” There was a grin of approval and a horse laugh or two at Thomas’s wit, and Thomas looked as if he had said a good thing and knew it, and so on. The next time I hear him hold forth, no doubt Thomas’s sympathies will be with the Proosians, and “that ‘ere Beeswax ’ll stick to ‘em like beeswax, for he’s a sticker, he is, and kin take a ‘eap o’ wolloping, he kin,” and so on, for he likes to be on the winning side, and, like the great majority of his countrymen, Thomas is a bit of a time-server.

A day or two of this sort of work will be found exceedingly enjoyable, and the angler need not go alone, for one can sit and fish at each end of the boat, provided they each watch the cast, though the man in front usually has much the best sport. This, however, you can balance by changing about now and then. I have taken above a cwt. of large chub in a day in this way. The flies used vary slightly, and it depends very much upon what part of the Thames you fish. On the lower parts large palmers are found to answer best; on the upper we find the silver turkey and artificial humble bee beat the palmers out of sight. Now and then an artificial cockchafer or beetle should be tried. The silver turkey is a fly of grilse-fly size—indeed, it may be used even larger; the body is of silver tinsel; the hackle, coch-y-bonddu of the deepest red; wings, a few fibres of green peacock herl, and over that two strips of darkish turkey. To make the fly more tempting a tail of a bit of wash leather is sometimes appended, and with good effect too. I seldom found any other fly but this and the humble bee needed from Abingdon to Reading. There is no need to cast the fly lightly; indeed, to be attractive to the chub it should flop into the water just as if it was really a fat insect fallen from a bough above. The best weapons are a grilse rod and line and pretty stout gut, so that as soon as the fish is hooked you can pull him away from the boughs and flags, which he would inevitably make for and dive under if he could. In throwing under boughs, should the fly catch in a twig or leaf, try gentleness first in dislodging it; should this fail, a sharp sudden snatch may be resorted to; every

method should be tried to loosen the hook before rowing up to it, as that process entirely disturbs the banks for many yards down. Of course it is desirable to cast as far under the boughs as possible, as in a hot summer day the chub lie in the shade, basking comfortably, and sailing slowly about to pick up stray provender ; but it is not every bough that is a chub bough. There are various circumstances required to make a good chub bough. The first is of course a secure home under roots or hollow banks. Then the bottom should be gravelly, not muddy or clayey ; next there should be a good stream running outside the boughs, though it may be but a gentle current under them. Then the water should not be too deep nor too shallow—four or five feet is the best depth ; and unless the angler is prepared to waste a great deal of time in fishing many boughs where there are no chub at all, it is as well that these circumstances should be known to him. Then, again, the state of the water will make a good deal of difference, and its being high or low frequently settles the point whether the chub are at home or not. In fact, for a successful prosecution of this kind of fishing, the angler or his attendant should know the water well. After hooking two or three chub under any bough, it is hardly worth while to waste more time in flogging it at that instant, as the chub, being a rather shy fish, is easily alarmed at his companion's struggles, and, though there may be several other fish in the same spot, they will not take again until they have had a rest of an hour or so to recover confidence. There are other places besides under overhanging trees which it is well worth while

to cast over for chub. High, bare, marly banks which go sheer down into the water, and alongside of which an eddy is observable, these are always worth a cast. The tails of weeds in shallows should have the fly shown to them. Old stumps, the eddies near locks, holes in campshots, or any other shelter which looks likely, should be tried, if ever so lightly, as, even if the angler knows the river pretty well, chub will shift a good deal occasionally. The head of a lob-worm, or a real cockchafer, may be used, and cast like a fly, with very good effect amongst large chub at times. But there is nothing so neat, clean, or workmanlike as the fly.

“Now.”

Of all the styles of fishing which were formerly pleasant and seductive, there was none equal to a day or two’s fly fishing for chub on the Thames. You did not require a southerly wind and a cloudy sky, nor water just clearing after rain, nor any of those peculiar and not common conditions which are required to produce sport in other branches of the art; no—all you wanted was ordinary summer weather and water, such as we usually have whole months of from June to October, but of which we have seen very few days this season. You wanted, besides, a fair amount of quiet—the ordinary sleepy, lazy kind of traffic common on the river twelve or fifteen years ago, so that the chub might come out of their holes under the banks and roots, and lie just within shelter of the overhanging boughs, watching for beetles, caterpillars, or what not, to drop off the foliage above and float past, when, with a wave like a small steamboat and a plunge like a

salmon, the 3lb., 4lb., or 5lb. chubs came at the offender and engulfed him. A well-executed cock-chafer, humble bee, or palmer with a hook to it had a similar effect. I am sorry to say, had ; for, save during the earliest hours of the morning, I know no part of the Thames where it has that effect now. Chubbing, as one used to do it, is gone ; and you can no more catch from 50lb. to 100lb. weight with the fly in a day nowadays than you could fly with a hook through you under those very boughs yourself; for with the first steam launch it is all over. "Pitter, pitter, pitter, pitter," you hear the distant warning. "Here's one of the tea-kettles coming," you say to yourself, and you know that the sport is over for the day. You have been lucky and killed four or five nice fish from 2lb. to 4lb. each, and the fish are coming freely at the chafer, and you calculate whether you can fish that elder tree under which you know are several baron and earl chubs, besides an archbishop and a royal highness, before the steam kettle rushes by. Pitter, pitter, pitter, patter. "There she rounds the point!" Patter, patter, patter, patter. "Coming up fast." Patter, patter, potter, potter. "One more throw. Ah ! confound him, he's missed it again !" Potter, potter, powter, powter. "Here it comes !" Roll, flop, sloosh ! Wave after wave rushes under the boughs, washing the chub "full fathom five" under the banks, there to stick in mortal terror for the next ten hours or more ; for there is never an hour, or hardly half an hour, that the angler does not hear the beat of those everlasting screws. The steamers are bad, and the towing boats are bad ; but they are

scarcely so aggravating and productive of bad language as an idiotic oarsman, or perhaps a pair, who, coming down stream instead of keeping the mid-current, come scraping and flopping along close to the bushes in-shore, and do not care a button whether they row over your line or no. I always long for a good stout punt then, that I may, when they are some yards away, exclaim, as old Jemmy Hall used to, in a mild inviting tone of voice, "Row into her well, sir; she's stronger there!" and if he won't take advice, why then he may damage the nose of his boat, and possibly even his own. Boats rowing up stream, of course, you know will keep close in shore, and you can hardly expect them to row out from the bushes, though a gentleman always will if he sees you in time, rather than spoil your sport; but a snob, never—he is too fond of showing you that he has as much right to take the wall as you have.

These several inconveniences, with a nasty cross wind, which made casting hard labour, combined to spoil my sport for the two days lately when I went up from Windsor to Bray and back, stopping at Monkey Island to collogue host Plummer, in his oddly decorated anglers' retreat among ye monkeys—monkeys painted and monkeys carved, and all very clever and humorous, engaged in various sporting and other operations, and called into being by the Duke of Marlborough, whose fishing-house Plummer's comfortable anglers' rest was formerly. There is good fishing all round about Monkey Island—perhaps it is as good trout water as any on the river, there being some rattling sharps, and jack being abundant, while

as for chub, barbel, and roach, they are plentiful ; and, added to this, friend Plummer is an old fisherman himself, and, consequently, can always give you the safest tip for his water, and tell you what it is best for you to go after. Partly owing to the above reasons, and to the incessant floppings and fightings kept up by the multitude of swans between Boveney and Bray, as I have said, I did not do much good. My best fish was 3½lb. ; and I got six or seven others, some of them goodly fish of 2lb. and upwards ; but I lost a lot, owing to the bad manner in which chafers are armed by the tackle makers. They have one hook, as a rule, placed under the belly of the cork imitation, and this hook is so badly placed that it misses about six or seven out of every ten fish. I have invented a method of arming them which I think will answer admirably, and, not only will catch pretty well every fish that really takes it in mouth, but a good many that come short at it. I double a bit of fine brass wire, so that there shall be a loop at each end ; this is lashed along the belly of the chafer ; the loop at the head takes the gut, the one at the tail takes an eyed triangle, which hangs down—and, oddly enough, when this is drawn sharply along, the triangle actually makes the chafer spin, and shows it thoroughly, while the hooks turning round can hardly fail to come in contact with the fish, if he touches the bait at all. I call it my spinning chafer. Anyhow, it is a great improvement on the old system of arming. In chafer fishing the bait will be made irresistible by the addition of two or three gentles to give it a smell and taste. I have now tried the ordinary chafer against every fly

I could think of, and I am satisfied that it moves more fish and gets more rises than any fly we know of. The big fish particularly like it. It is rather harder to throw than a fly, particularly if the wind is hard ; but still you can get out quite enough line with a double-handed rod. It does not do well with a single.

I have mentioned the swans on this reach, and they are so numerous as to be quite a nuisance. I counted above twenty at the same time ; my son counted twenty-nine a day or two before. The place swarms with them, and what the use of so many can be I cannot conceive ; they certainly are not picturesque. A pair here and there might be, but two or three dozen of them—no ! Plummer complains bitterly of the way they kill his ducks, a great number of which they destroy, and others they seriously cripple. I saw five or six with broken legs, wings, &c. And perhaps the worst fishing about that district is the perch fishing, all the perch-spawn yearly being hunted out and eaten by the swans, while even the trout redds do not escape ; for Mr. Swan, with his tail in the air, and his long neck, rips them up from end to end, and gobbles the dainty eggs down by the pint ; and then Plummer “can’t make out how it is that there ain’t so many trout as there used to be.” How it is there are any at all, with the huge mob of swans between Boveney and Bray, I do not know. “Birds in their little nests agree,” says that good man, but bad naturalist, Dr. Watts. I don’t think, as a rule, that they do, and I am sure they don’t “out” of them ; for, from the sparrows up to cocks and hens, and on to swans, they do a good deal of fighting. The latter

particularly are always at it here, and, if three-quarters of them were taken away, and made to emigrate, they would all be the happier and better for it.

Since writing the above I have met with a fact which strongly confirms my view as regards the perch. The other day I had a little gudgeoning with a very old friend at Hampton. He told me before we went out that he never remembered so many perch in the river ; and, truly, at every pitch we went to we caught from two or three to seven or eight perch. I should think we took two or three dozen of them ; three-quarters of them, however, were undersized, and were thrown in again. I have known that water for thirty years, and I certainly never remember anything like the vast quantity of small two-year perch. For some years to come there will, in the season, be the best perch fishing in the river on the Hampton and Sunbury water, and the fishermen will reap a rich harvest in the winter. And what is the reason ? Why, that there are very few swans on the water, and, for the last two or three years, the breeding seasons have been bad, so that there have been but few young ones. Much of the perch spawn, therefore, has escaped ; and it is very hard on other parts of the river, not only on the angler, but on the poor fisherman, who has enough to do to get a living, that such a mob of swans should be maintained, to his positive injury. I can understand, too, the Crown claiming the right to have swans upon the public river ; but what right City companies can have, miles and miles above the point where the City jurisdiction ever extended to, I cannot understand.

REMINISCENCES OF AN ANGLER.

"Novacula in cotem."—*Old Proverb.*

FARMER GUMSHUN.

ONE evening, while on a fishing excursion down in Bucks, I was smoking my pipe in the inn parlour after a hard day at the pike, which had not resulted very successfully, when I overheard the following story which was told between whiffs and sips. We will omit them, and also the manner of telling. It related to a certain Mr. Three-an'-four, of Gray's Inn, and one Farmer Gumshun, of Buckinghamshire. It appeared that Three-an'-four, in some roundabout way, through his wife's relations, had become "acquent" with Gumshun; and Gumshun, being a hearty, good, hospitable chap, as some Bucks farmers are, asked him down one 1st of September to shoot. The farm was a roughish 700 acres, with a fair sprinkling of birds on it, and Three-an'-four made out from ten to fifteen brace a day for five or six days very pleasantly, with an off-day on a neighbour's farm, while high jinks and smoke-pipes came off very satisfactorily of an evening; and altogether it was about as pleasant and healthy a week as a hard-worked London attorney could wish for. Three-an'-four was a jovial

chap enough over a jug of old stingo or a bowl of punch, and could sing you a jolly song with a good chorus to it, or turn you out a merry tale which set all the yokels on the grin ; and chuckles were plenty, so that his company was enjoyed and liked. Thus what was only a casual visit became a yearly affair ; and Three-an'-four's advent was looked for as a pleasant occurrence, and his stories were bottled for country use and told at market tables far and wide for the ensuing twelvemonth. This continued for four or five years, and Three-an'-four always pitched it very strongly into Gumshun as to what he would do for him if he would only come to town ; but, as Gumshun had no occasion to go there, he merely felt grateful to his friend and shook his hand, patted him on the back, and insisted on his taking another glass before he started of the "old ooman's corjial"—a compound of gin, sugar, oranges, &c., "only fit for anglers or very honest men," as Izaak hath it.

At length it befel that Gumshun had some little matter of business to transact in the metropolis, and, driving to the rail some six miles off, he made the transit to town. He got rather put about in the streets, and was shoved hither and thither at the station ; and at the Blue Boar, where he left his things until he could inform Three-an'-four of his advent, they didn't seem quite as hearty-like to him as they were at the White Horse at Aylesbury or the Red Lion at Wycomb. But, having deposited his bag, he asked his way to Gray's Inn.

" Mr. Three-an'-four in, sir ? " " I'll step and see, sir. What name, sir ? " said an office imp, taking it

down with a grin at Gumshun's gaiters. "Mr. Three-an'-four 'll see you in ten minutes, sir," said the imp, returning. Gumshun coloured a trifle, but sat down and waited. The ten minutes spread out to pretty near twenty, when a bell tinkled, and the imp said—

"Mr. Three-an'-four 'll see you now, sir; that's his office, sir—door before you;" and Gumshun made for the door, thinking it was odd rather—but still business must be attended to before pleasure. So, clearing up, he entered with outstretched hand to greet his friend, who no doubt was on the threshold waiting to shake his arm off. He entered. At the further end of the room was a large box, with rails at the top, like the den of a dangerous beast, which, perhaps, from some points of view Three-an'-four was. As our friend advanced into the room a small shutter was drawn back, and the face of Three-an'-four was seen behind the rails in the aperture. As to handshaking, that was out of the question.

"Ah, Mr. Gumshun, how-de-do, sir, how-de-do? and what has brought you up into this wicked world? Business, eh? Ah, to be sure, to be sure. Where are you stoppin', Gumshun? Blue Boar, eh? Comfortable inn, capital. Come and dine with you by'm-by, at six o'clock, and have a chat over all the good folks at Wheat-land End. Terribly pressed by business just now—oh terribly. See you by'm-by. Take care of yourself. Ta ta"—and before he knew where he was, poor old Gumshun found himself on Gray's Inn pavement blinking like an owl in the sunlight.

Six o'clock came, and with it Three-an'-four, cheery and genial as ever. They dined, and had a bottle of

sherry and a bowl of punch, all of which was duly charged in Gumshun's bill—as two dinners, 9s.; one bottle of sherry, 6s.; ale, 1s.; punch, 5s.—total, 1 guinea. And just before he departed, Three-an'-four said, “Ah, by the way, and how's the birds? Plenty, eh? Glad to hear it, glad to hear it. We'll show 'em the way along next 'first,' eh? Now take care of yourself; do take care of yourself. Ta ta. Not a drop more, thankye.”

On the evening of the 31st of August next ensuing, a gig containing Mr. Three-an'-four and the driver, with a large carpet bag and a gun case, and drawn by a raw-boned horse, struggled through the mud of Wheat-lane End, and stopped at the Priory Farm. Ratta-tat-tat. “Ah, James, my fine feller! How's the master? Take that gun case. Take care, now.”

James looked “duberous,” to use his own words subsequently. “He warn't quite sure *how* the master was, but he knowed he was terrible busy, and would see Muster Three-an'-four in ten minutes or so.” A quarter of an hour passed over, and Three-and-four sat fuming in the gig—he wasn't used to this kind of thing—when the door opened and old Gumshun appeared, holding up a huge gridiron before his face, through which he spoke.

“Ah, Muster Three-an'-four, how do, sir? how do? what brings 'e down to this 'ere wicked world? Where be stoppin', Mr. Three-an'-four? where be stoppin'? Red Lion at Wycomb? Capital house, capital! Come an' dine with 'e by'm-by at six o'clock, and have a chat over aal the good volks in Lunnon. Tur'ible pressed by business just now, tur'ible. See 'e by'm-

by. Take care o' y'self ; do take care o' y'self—Ta ta, Ta ta"—and the door closed on Mr. Gumshun and the gridiron.

The driver roared with laughing all the way home, and even the raw-boned old horse was said to have got up a spasmodic sort of chuckle. Three-an'-four went back again to London a sadder and a wiser man ; he was never seen at Wheat-lane End again, and Gumshun's friends tell the story with infinite gusto all round the country to the present day.

Now, I don't doubt there was a good deal of truth in the tale, for hospitality to stranger sportsmen was but a few years ago by no means unknown in country places, and even now in the more out-of-the-way corners it is not quite absent ; but it certainly is, under the present system of education, &c., growing "small by degrees" and anything but "*beautifully less.*" I, however, have happily met many a pleasant instance of it, even in the character of a perfect stranger. I remember some years ago being down in Oxfordshire with my old acquaintance Sam Sumpunkyns—one of the oddest fish I know, but of that anon. Sam and I had leave through a friend from a miller and proprietor in those parts to fish a bit of the W., and we started betimes at our work. I will not go on to describe the day or relate our sport. I killed a brace of fish, I remember, which weighed $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb. respectively, with a fly we called the jay's-wing, and should have killed more but for a very heavy rise of the Mayfly, which quite spoilt our chance. Neither Sam nor I knew the boundaries ; they were told us after a fashion, and it seemed that they were rather

involved. Not that boundaries ever troubled Sam much ; he had a nasty knack of overstepping them, and then apologising for it in the most polite and profuse manner when collared—a practice very common even among respectable folks, or folks in a respectable station.

I hate breaking bounds, but on this occasion I was fishing placidly through a meadow where was some nice water. I was just casting over a fish that had looked at me and refused, when a shadow came on the water from behind. I was crouching down and looking low, for the day was bright, when a broad accent asked if I'd "had any sport;" and I looked rather cross, for the fish slipped under the bank directly. I glanced round ; it came from a hearty, weather-beaten old chap with a hoe in his hand. "No, I hadn't had much sport." He "allowed the day was too bright;" I "allowed it was ;" and so we got conversing. He said "his grandfather never took a fish out of that stream under 4lb. weight." Thereon I felt rather like our friend James above, "duberous." I ventured to bring in Mr. W.'s (our permissor's) name, which met with no response ; and then to opine or suggest in some roundabout way that the fishing before us belonged to him, which brought out the fact that it did not, but was the sole right of the individual who, &c. Thereon I fell honestly to apologising, feared I was trespassing, hoped I had not intruded, and so on. "Not at all, not at all. Don't speak on't, sir. Happy to see any gentleman as is a sportsman for an hour or two's vishin'. What's the odds on't ? There bain't a many vish in t' stream, but what there be's good 'uns.

There's a five-pounder under that sally bush," &c. I was duly grateful, and fished and chatted till I had got through the old fellow's bounds, when nothing would do but Sam and I must come up to the farm and have a crust o' bread and cheese and a glass of home-brewed. Wishing to meet kindness as it was meant, we went and made a hearty lunch off a rare big crusty loaf of home-baked, with home-made butter coloured like cowslips and a picture to see, home-brewed as clear as sherry, with a kind of fizz in your nose after you'd swallowed a pint or so of it, and a quarter of Cheddar. In course of conversation Sam asked him if he had any shooting. "Not much ; there was two or three coveys about, or would be ; he never troubled them much ; but if Sam liked to bring his gun down early in September he'd save 'em for him, and he was heartily welcome." We did manage to get away at last, when we could not eat or drink more ; and we left the hearty old patriarch with very pleasant feelings and lots of good wishes.

We had hardly worked through another field or so when we saw a gentleman on the bank fishing just below a mill. As we came up he walked towards us, inquired of our sport, and stated that he had turned so many score of trout into that very water but a few months back. Then I again began to think we were out of our latitude, and at once put the question. "Oh, yes, the fishing *was* his ; so was the mill above ; but it didn't matter a bit—we were as welcome as the flowers in May. He could fish every day—we were strangers, and couldn't." So, in spite of all remonstrance, he put up his rod and walked with us. " You

would stand a better chance with the fly if that side-stream was running. We have not run it lately, for the water has been so scarce ; but I'll tell my man to turn it on." Our friend vanished into the mill, and in two minutes a fine stream was running away from the mill in waste out of pure courtesy, and merrily rattling over the pebbles. But, though the fish rose, the Mayfly was too mighty for us ; so, after trying for about twenty minutes, we gave it up, and, with many hearty thanks for his kindness, we left our friend, who offered us fishing whenever we liked to come his way. We took our leave ; and I venture to think that it is not on every stream you might come to that two trespassers would be treated exactly in this way.

As a contrast, I remember when Sam and I some years ago got a sort of open permission on a bit of water in Surrey. There was a terrible jealousy always about the fishing. Just above our water was a most obnoxious fellow, who held some snuff mills ; and, to prevent the possibility of anyone fishing a yard on *his* water, he had it railed off closely and a severe chain run right across the stream. Nothing aggravated the "O. B." ("old buffer,") as we used to call him, like our catching a fish, even on our own water, anywhere near this chain. The moment he saw either of us approach this spot, up went the waste-gate and down came a mass of muck and weeds, which he always stored up for the purpose. The disgusting proceeding begat anything but a Christian frame of mind in us. All we wanted was to be allowed to fish our own water ; and if we desired to get anywhere near this chain we had to slip and creep up like red Indians,

and then we could never compass it for more than a quarter of an hour or so, for by that time we were always observed ; and many a time did we give the "O. B.'s" fish a rugging, even to the losing of a fly, though we couldn't get them out, in pure spite and aggravation. One day we had caught but one fish, and were sauntering up the bank towards the chain.

"Sam," said I, "there's the O. B. grinning at us through his opera glass."

"I twig him," said Sam ; "now for the weeds," and sure enough in ten minutes down came the weeds thick and furious.

"I say, Sam, there is not much chance below ; it's a bad day. Let's stop here close to the chain, and madden the O. B. by catching that fish about ten times."

"All right, old man ; I see it ; we will."

So we sat and smoked calmly till the weeds all went by and the "O. B.'s" stock was exhausted, and then I began casting close to the chain. Presently my fly took the grass, and I kept on waving the rod as if casting, while Sam stuck the dead trout on the hook and slipped it into the stream. Then I struck him scientifically, and next played him and wound him up in the most artistic way that I knew, and Sam landed him, almost too perfectly ; and so, after proper inspection and exclamations of delight, he was basketed and we wetted him. After a decent interval the farce was repeated, the trout was played and landed again, and after that a third time ; then we moved down a few yards and caught him twice more ; and, not wishing to overdo it, we gradually meandered out

of sight, leaving the “O. B.” in a perfectly diabolical state of mind. Unfortunately, the upshot was not so satisfactory. The “O. B.” was, through his profession, quite “up to snuff,” and it seems that the lord of the manor really possessed the right of fishing, though he rarely interfered with the millowners or exercised it; but the “O. B.” went to him and worried him, and worked on him to such a tune that he contrived to get our fishing stopped altogether, and so we lost one of the nicest and handiest bits of fishing I ever enjoyed. We had had it to ourselves for two seasons. We never fished it of an evening, and could nearly always kill our four or five brace of pounders. The “O. B.” was remembered (not advantageously) in our orisons for many a day afterwards. Sam always said he would treat him to some punch, or dance a hornpipe on his waistcoat, or do something equally festive to him, if ever he met him; but, as he was not likely to meet him, their orbits being different, like Messrs, Pyke and Pluck he confined himself to mere “verbal smiffligation.”

BANKERS AND TINKERS.

"I am so good a proficient in one quarter of an hour, that I can drink with any tinker in his own language, during my life."—*Henry IV.*

As I have already said, I have a particular affection for the humble banker, and I return to his consideration, therefore, without apology; but, then, he must be a humble banker—a man of the true, old-fashioned, simple Waltonian type; intelligent, with a love of nature; keen for his sport, yet not greedy; no swaggerer, brawler, nor ruffler; no grumbler nor pothouse sot; willing to share his sport or his fish with a poorer brother; observant, and full of odd stories and reminiscences of former sport. Let such be my banker, and I make common cause with him instantly. I will sit me under a hawthorn or a woodbine hedge, and eat my hard eggs, smoke my pipe, and chat the day away, and wish no better occupation so that my banker may now and then, every quarter of an hour or so, pull out a sizeable fish or two.

But I fear that public-house clubs, promoted by publicans and undeniable "sinners," have, by working the "competition wallah" to their own ends, produced a style of banker in too many instances, whom one prefers to give a very wide berth to; a

drunken, quarrelsome, noisy brute, whose language would affright the naiads from their haunts, and even shock the sensibilities of the kelpies. Excursion trains of these individuals are now and then let loose upon some quiet little country place, to make the peaceful Sabbath and the sweet wholesome air hideous with the vilest language and the reek of the filthiest tobacco, stale beer, and gin. Twenty years ago the object of the invasion probably would have been a pugilistic competition ; but *nous avons changé tout cela*. Of all the elements introduced by modern piscators into their art I think perhaps that of a set competition is the least desirable and the least graceful. Men dwell so much together in cities, and the crowded noisy companionship is so little for their mental or moral improvement, that the few hours' quiet and rest, or reflection, which the true banker gets when away by himself on Thames or Lea, act like a moral and even physical bath to him. In fact, there is really no one who so much requires it, perhaps, as the bettermost and more rational among the artizan classes of London and our other large cities. Every man to his trade. Let each take an interest in his own, and strive to work it so that it may produce the greatest real benefit to the greatest number.

Consequently, as I have said, I take much account of the solitary banker. One meets very original minds, really "peculiar people," among them at times. I have met many who have interested me—many whom I have known for years, and who have been quite old friends. There are three classes of men among what we are pleased to call the lower orders,

who furnish more fishermen than all the rest put together, and they are tinkers, cobblers, and barbers—that is to say, comparatively speaking. Neither tinkers nor barbers are a numerous craft, but the proportion of these of their calling, who are devoted brothers of the angle (with cobblers, who are more numerous, perhaps), compared with those of their crafts who are not, is far greater than may be found in any other trade. The tinker is very often a peripatetic vagabond—though, perhaps, this is to an extent tautology—who lives from hand to mouth, and to whom the capture of a fish or two or the failure of the same often means dinner, or rather supper—for that is the cherished meal of such arabs—or no supper. When England was “Merrie England,” and there was some fishing in hosts of places free to all and any who chose to fish, what a heavenly life it must have been in summer time to be a tinker—or suppose we call him by the old word tinkler—on a good circuit! when a man who knew his craft and his customers was more welcome than even the pedlar himself! How without a care he mooned along through the deep hazel and blackberry clad lanes, at his own pace, some eight or ten miles a day; now musing, now singing, now stopping to crack a bunch of tempting hazel nuts, now culling a choice spray of blackberries, anon picking a nosegay of our most charming indigenous flowers for the good hostess of the Bear and Ragged Staff at the next village, who was always glad to welcome the tinkler, and who had always half a dozen small tinklering jobs waiting his arrival, which paid for his board and drink and left a

small silver surplus to speed him on his way in the morning ; now stopping to grind a pair of scissors for Jemima the pretty maid at the rectory, from whom a kiss is ready payment, or to stop a hole in the saucepan of Mrs. Giles, the farmer's wife at Grange Farm, for which a few coppers and a draught of her nut-brown home-brewed sent him happily onward ; now pitching a merry stave and singing, haply like Autolycus—

Jog on, jog on the footpath way,
And merrily hent the stile a ;
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad one tires in a mile a.

Now sitting down to smoke a quiet reflective pipe in some fragrant shaw, where the beeches showered down their mast and the wood-pigeons cooed all the day long ; now cutting a long taper hazel or ash twig as the sparkling stream hove in sight on Slopwash Common, where half a mile or more of the very choicest of the trout stream flowed, and which was open to all, and which in those days no squire had ever ventured to lay his embargo on, but which has long since, by some chickery pokery known to modern law, been grabbed, and shut up by the lord of the manor.

Formerly there were hundreds of these free bits of water scattered about all over the country—sometimes half a mile or more, sometimes only a hundred or two of yards in length or even less ; but somehow they were always about the nicest bits of golden, gravelly shallow in the stream, and affected by the best-fed and largest trout. There are few enough of them left now, alas ! Ahab has covetted the vineyard of

Naboth, and if he has not got men of Belial to swear blasphemy against anyone, he has collared the vine-yard by favour of that law which is so effective when there is plenty of money and possession on one side, and a very little money and only a divided and limited interest on the other. There are very few "Village Hampdens" "with dauntless breasts" nowadays, and the little tyrants have it all their own way. But we are describing the past.

And now see how tinkler Tim or Tom, or whatever his name may be, pulls out of his hat an old cast of flies or a worm tackle—how neatly he fixes it to the point of his most un-Farlow-like rod; with what wondrous skill and lightness, considering the clumsiness of the whole affair, he pitches it over that fine pound and a half fish that the squire's son tried for in vain yesterday! But rough though the tinkler's flies, they are of the right colour; and the trout evidently would rather go home with the tinkler than pay a visit to the squire, and accordingly he takes the offered dainty as greedily as an old maid does flattery; and after the usual amount of flouncing hither and thither yields up his life to the tinkler's skill, as does a brother of the same hatch and brood some twenty yards above; when the cast is returned to the hat, the hazel twig cast aside upon the bank, and once more the accomplished piscator is loafing past the cottages, crying "any pots and kettles to mend, any umberellas to mend, any knives or scissors to grind," &c., no need to say to him as Canning did :

Needy knife-grinder, whither art thou roaming?
Rough is the way, thy wheel is out of order.

In his case it is all inapplicable ; he knows where he is going, and where he will be welcome too. The way is easy enough, and his wheel is in first-rate condition, as witness the sparks that fly from his stone as he chats to Mary, the maid of the mill ; and as for needy, I promise you that he won't, like Canning's knife-grinder, ask you for sixpence to drink your health, and if he did, I'm sure you would not, like the "friend of humanity," exclaim : "I give thee sixpence ? I would see thee d——d first," &c. Canning's grinder, you see, must have had a bad beat, while mine has a good one, and that's just the difference. As for mine, bless you ! he has more money in his pocket than he wants to spend for weeks to come, and every village, too, will yield him tribute ; and so he goes on (or used to) happy, healthy, and contented, with few cares and no taxes. For a man whose existence is sufficient for himself, and who has the true vagabond spirit in him, it would be hard to find a more congenial existence than the tinker's.

I knew a tinker once—Tinker Tim I have called him, though it was not his name ; but that was when days began to turn upon the trade, though there was still a living to be had by walking and working for it. Tim was the strangest of fellows—a most enthusiastic fisherman ; he knew every bit of open fishing for twenty miles round London, and a good many that were not open, too, to some of which he was not always unwelcome ; for Tim knew many rare secrets of the art not chronicled by Dennys, and could impart them judiciously when he chose (he could get particular hackles from special fowls hard to get and rare to see,

and he had secrets for dying dubbing which were worth many a good day's fishing to learn ; and, if a fervent angler had such a thing as a particularly large and wary trout who had resisted all the allurements he was master of, he was not now and then above consulting the tinker, who was to be trusted and was no poacher. Sometimes Tim was mighty quiet and self-contained. He had little beyond the time of day, and a good word or two for a stranger ; but for the old acquaintance and gossip whom he knew and liked he could be blithe as a bird and communicative as you please. Tim was one of those free and happy souls who haven't a spark of envy or jealousy in their composition ; who would tell a disconsolate flyfisher which was the killing fly, and show a fishless banker the killing swim and bait, or perform any other kindly office in his power. He was a first-rate fisherman himself, and with a rod made of old umbrella sticks, &c., contrived by his own skill, and with a few fine sorrel hairs pulled out of some stallion's tail, he often produced very marvellous results. Everything, even his reel, was home made, and, rough as it all looked, he had sundry ingenious appliances of his own which were by no means unworthy of notice. Tim was a wonderful hand at baits. He always had baits of one kind or another, or knew where to get them at short notice, which would catch fish, and the old formula of worms, gentles, and greaves, the usual *repertoire* of the punt fisher on the Thames, he utterly abjured and scorned as a formula. He just used whatever he could get—grasshoppers, bumblebees, wasp grubs, anything he could easiest come by. He

once, with a mixture of rotten cheese, fat rusty bacon, and buttercups (to give it a colour), all mashed up together, made such a take of chub as I have seldom seen ; and once, when no worms could be got, he made a swingeing take of barbel by baiting with some chopped-up butcher's scraps. He was never at a loss ; if he could not get one thing he used another. His great point was his knowledge of the state of the water, and how it affected the various swims. The Thames was, of course, his favourite and chief hunting grounds, and here he was unerring ; one sight of the water was enough for Tim, he knew in a moment what particular swim was in the best ply ; and whether he would stop at Hampton, or cry "knives and scissors to grind" on through Sunbury, Walton, Shepperton, and Chertsey, with his one-eyed, stump-tailed terrier at his heels, or no, was just a question of colour and inches, when he was in the mood to go a-fishing.

"Ye see, sir," he would say, "fish is just like us, they knows where the wittles is best and cheapest, and where the beds is comforablest and easiest. Now, this 'ere swim, ye see, is just perfect like ; a hinch or two more o' water'd just spile it, though per'aps you wouldn't think it, though I knows so. When the water's like this, the hunder current brings whatever grub there is goin' just past that old willer stump right in here, and the fish follers it ; three inches lower, and it sets right out into the stream, and three higher, and its all of a bile, and this bottom aint worth a dump. Wot then ? Why then I has to go up three mile, and more too, close by Walton backwater ; there we'll find the breams drawed in just in reach of the

bank, and if that 'ere Hone aint stuck his punt right in shore—which he know his way about in respect to bream he do, and there arn't a many as do—I'll war'n't I kill 30lb., and more. For I knows a old wood pile just off the road, where, by clearin' away the rubbish, I'll pick as many red worms as 'll last me the arternoon ; but these 'ere cowdung bobs aint a bad bait neither, though tender for most sort o' fish, though bream is fond of a red worm or a broundlin, so I shall put these 'ere bobs by for to-morrer, and bake 'em to toughen 'em a bit. I mended the lock of Mr. Purdy's well last time I was up at Chessy (Chertsey), an' he promised to lend me a boat for a few hours, and if I don't walk into them chubs under the bushes there to-morrer it's a pity. I see two gents a fishin' them bushes last time I was up there, and, lor bless you ! they hadn't but three fish, and not one on 'em a pound. The water was just six hinchess too low ; the 'oles was half out o' water, and they went away a sayin' that 'there worn't no chubs there,' when there was a ton on 'em in the deeps werry like. It is a wonderful thing to me how little men as has to get their livin' by fishin' studies the water and the fish. Fish shifts, as I said afore, with the grub and the stream, that's just it ; and if you knows wot their 'abits is, by lookin' at the water you knows just wot to go arter, and which swims 'll pay best and which won't, whereas the loafer knows nothin' and don't want to know. Puntsman says this is a swim, and he sticks to it all the season long, whether the water's high or low, and whether the fish is in it or not. 'Once a swim, orvays a swim,' says he. There's more

groun' bait wasted on the Thames in a year than 'd need to catch all the fish in it if it was properly used. I likes a man as goes pokin' about by hisself, a peepin' and watchin' to find out where the fish lays, and when he's found 'em, whether it's a regler swim or no, just goes and fishes for 'em ; yer can't catch 'em where they arn't, sir, ye can't really ; as Bill Ben orvays says 'Sampson wos a strong man, but he couldn't pull his boots on if he hadn't got none, and you can't ketch the fish if they ain't there. It's agin reason.' As for the feller as wastes pecks o' bait where there arn't no fish, he's a himposter and a 'umbug. I see sich a feller once go an' fish a noted perch 'ole, where the water was 'igh and all of a bile. I see he didn't know nothin' about it, and I sits down below a purtendin' to fish for roach till he was gone. 'Bite Garge?' says I. 'No they don't,' ses he ; 'I've been trying a 'our or more without a touch,' and he ups pole and cuts it. 'Bites!' says he, 'why there aint a perch in the 'ole. That 'ere Billy Shooker's been 'ere wi' his nets, I calc'late,' and off he goes. As soon as ever he was clean gone, I just sculls the boat up quietly, ties her up to a withy, and lays there and smokes my pipe. I never moves for a hour, but lets the fish settle agin. Then I just gently drops a paternoster with a worm on the bottom 'ook and a minner on the top, well into a bit o' dead water, a little furder up than where Garge was, almost in the meader—sort o' cow drink like it was, were there worn't eighteen inches o' water, and were that ere genus Garge never thought o' lookin' ; and I began a pullin' 'em out two at a time, two at a time real good uns' and for two 'ours I

laid into 'em, 'ardly a fish under 'arf a pun'—some on 'em might be three to the pun', but not a many; many on 'em topped the pun', and I just has as fine a bit o' sport all to myself for a hour an' half as ever I had in my life; three dozen and over I sacks, till I'd almost cleared 'em out. I never tells Garge nothin', for I didn't want to 'miliate him; but I sells 'em to Muster Peters, all 'cept two as I took 'ome for supper, for three 'arf crowns—and a good arternoon's work too. It's wonderful 'ow near people is often-times to a good day's sport, and yet misses it for the want of a little savvy wous d'ye see. That Nottingham Garge, he teached 'em something, he did, about fishin' fine and far off, as they call it, and some on 'em larnt it; but some of the Thames fishermen is that concayted and obstnet, and ignorant besides, that no one nor nothin'll ever teach 'em n'out. There's some of 'em as always will do the same thing time after time. Wotever happens, you can't convince 'em, and some of 'em never think they can throw in enough groundbait, too; no matter whether the fish is full or empty, whether they're feedin' or fed, they keep on a chuckin' it in, five or six balls at a time, till the fish is that full that if you do by a chance happen to catch one he's a 'bustin with bait, and on'y bit at your'n out o' aggrawation at seein' so much on it wasted. They can't understand that if you have the fish handy, the great thing is to keep 'em on the lookont, and not to gorge 'em right off, and many a chance of a pretty good day I've seen done for in that way." So Tim would chat with his intimates, instilling precepts worth remembering,

and dropping words of wisdom not to be forgotten.

"There's a big trout in the corner of Sunbury Weir, Tim," I said to the Tinker one day; I have tried for him for a week, and can't get a touch of him. I have seen him feeding all over the weir several times; but he won't look at my bait, and he is a real big one. I wish you would come up and take a look at him." Tim nodded, and said, "I shall be through there to-morrow afternoon, and am going to stop the night there, and, if you'll be up early in the morning, we'll give him a look-up. It must be pretty early, too; for, if he's there, that 'ere Screwgem knows on him, and he's a weer o' Screwgem and knows a bait above a bit; but, if we're 'arly enough before he gets up, d'ye see, we'll happen to take him unaweereres." "Very well, Tim; come and tap at the side window at the Flower Pot, and I'll be ready." "Give us two or three triangles and a strand of gut, and I'll tie a proper tayckle for him." "Take what you like, Tim," and I handed him my box of "all sorts," from which he selected what he wanted.

Five o'clock next morning found Tim at my window. "Nothin' like the hearly mornin' for a big un," said Tim; "they've had the night to rest in, and arn't frightened like they are when they've had twenty boats and punts over 'em; and the first time in the day as a trout feeds is the most safest for a run from him. I see the fish a week ago, aud he lies in that corner where the heavy stream is," continued Tim, as he punted up the weir, singing as he poled along, in high spirits, a doggerel affair I had heard fragments

of before, the tune being something like that of the old glee, "Little Pigs":

A werry big trout laid under a root—
Root, root, rootletum toot—
A werry big trout laid under a root;
Whack-fal-larity, whack-fal-larity! (*bis*)
Oh, what a big feller was he!

A werry big cockchafer boozled along—
Buzz, fuzz, boomerang bong—
A werry big cockchafer boozled along;
Whack-fal-larity, whack-fal-larity! (*bis*)
A buzzin' owld beadle was he.

Says Trouty, says he, with a wink of his eye—
Eye, eye—"Here, don't ye go by,
I've the snuggest back parlour as ever you spy;"
Whack-fal-larity, whack-fal-larity! (*bis*)
"Won't you step in and sing us a song?"

The stupid owld beadle was proud of his song—
Buzz, fuzz, boomerang bong—
He stopp'd just a little, and stopp'd just too long;
Whack-fal-larity, whack-fal-larity! (*bis*)
Oh, 'tis pride's the worst company!

And what 'd become of the lawyers and trout—
Trout, trout, and the d——l all out—
If beadles, like clients, warnt buzzin' about?
Whack-fal-larity, whack-fal-larity! (*bis*)
And it wasn't for wanitee?

Meantime, I fixed the tackle, and put on a bait. When we reached the spot, however, Tim declined my arrangement. "It won't do, nohows. I see the fish a-feedin', and I've seen many a big trout a-feedin'. If he was a four or five pounder, that 'ere little bait mout do well enough; but this 'ere fish is a dozen

pound and more, and the baits them fish goes for is real sizable ones—roaches or daces of four to the pun'." Diving into the well, Tim fished out a dace of what I thought portentous size for a trout. It was a big jack bait of close on three ounces. He fixed it on the hooks he had prepared, fastened it to the trace, tried it two or three times till he made it spin to his fancy —no easy matter. "Now," he said, fixing the punt temporarily to the side of the weir, "you wait there; I'll spin the weir, and, if I hooks the fish, I'll drop the rod down to you; you play him till I runs round to you, and then, when we're both in the punt, I think we can handle him, for we must get him away from the weir as soon as we can, as there's a pile or two in it wot is old friends of his'n, I reckon."

In two minutes he was on the weir beam, lying down flat upon it, and spinning the bay where the trout was supposed to be with wonderful ease and skill. Ten minutes past, and the bait spun into and out of the stream, now up, now down, but nothing happened. Another ten minutes passed, and I saw the big fish roll over the top of the water some yards below, and then make a dash down in front of Tim's bait; the baits were leaping into the air and flying in all directions, and they *were* big roach and dace, and not "Brougham's babies" by any means. Little by little the line was paid out, and the bait dropped down a few yards, across and across, from eddy to eddy, yard by yard. In about ten minutes more the fish had gorged his first bait, and came up for another. I was looking on with breathless interest, when I saw the big fish roll up, with half his back out of water, and

pounce upon Tim's bait like a tiger. Tim was on his feet in a minute, and I heard the reel give one prolonged screech as the monster dashed down to the tail of the stream, and Tim came slipping along the weir with the rod bent double, and the fish fighting at the end of the stream, with fifty yards of line out. "Now look out!" roared Tim, above the cataract; "the moment you gets the rod, get the line tight agin. He's on safe ground where he is now, and it'll take him a minute or two to come up, and by that time I'll be along with you."

Keeping the rod upright, and the line as tight as he could, he dropped the butt gently into my hands. The fish was well on, and I had scarcely hold of the rod when he began to head up, and I wound in the line; and, by the time he had reached his feeding ground again, Tim was in the punt, and we had got below him. Two other fine runs he made down to the tail of the weir, and the second time, with a little gentle pressure, we got him into the sharp, but steady, stream below, and worked him away from the weir pool into a neighbourhood where he was more of a stranger; and here it was only a question of time and a good hold. Tim managed the punt like a master, only giving a brief word of caution now and then, and not many of them, for he had "confidence in the rod," as he expressed it, and never liked to flurry the angler. Presently, as the trout began to run short, the punt was grounded on a gravelly shallow, where there was plenty of slack water outside, into which I coaxed the fish. The pole was laid down, and Tim took up the net, kneeling down and sinking it, ready for the last

act of the play. I gradually led the fish nearer and nearer, and, when I saw him under the rod point, and what a splendid fish he was, I confess that my heart was in my mouth. "Oh ! if anything were to happen, and he got off now !" I felt that I should hate myself for ever. But my fears were groundless—steadily the net was thrust forward deep in the water. The fish came within reach, and, with an upward sweep, Tim had him, and he was flopping in the bottom of the punt. "Whoo-oop ! hoop ! hoop ! hoo-oop !! Thirteen pounds and a half, by the Lord Harry, and what a splendacious creature ! a king of trouts, with all his jewels on, gold and silver and rubies. Twenty-eight inches and a half ! he's the finest fish I ever caught, Tim." "Yes, sir, I 'spect he is, for he's a rael beauty, and worth gettin' up for, and I sees as Mr. Screwgem's of the same opinion, only he don't get up quite early enuff ; for here he comes. We was only just in time, sir. Lor, Sir ! the sight o' this'll be galls and wormholes and wuss than the toothache to him ; for he, you may lay your life, he meant to 'ave him, only, ye see, we've got him." And Screwgem, who came up just then, didn't look too delighted, though he vastly admired the fish, and drank doch-an-dhurris with us.

We reached the landing place, and I gave Tim a sovereign, which I had much difficulty in forcing on him, and collared my trout, which made what Tim called "a nero" of me for a week or two in piscatorial circles. "Mind, sir," said Tim, turning to me as he was going, " whenever you wants to catch a *big* Thames trout, use a *big* bait, and don't go foolin' around with

a footy little bleak as he won't pick his teeth with." And so for the time we parted.

Tim had but one relation in the world, and that was a niece. Tim's only sister had married a good-looking ne'er-do-well, who took to, or rather increased his drinking after he was married, and finally left on his wife the duty of supporting both herself and him. Work and trouble eventually killed her ; her scamp of a husband became an inmate in a pauper lunatic asylum, where he too died ; and Tim took charge of his niece, Alice Benson, *aetate* nearly six. Little Alice, a sunny-faced, golden-haired child, for years went Tim's rounds with him. At first Tim contrived a kind of swinging hammock on the back of the grindery, in which the child could rest when tired of walking, and sing and prattle while Tim trudged on and wheeled her along many a mile over hill and dale. One of the prettiest sights I ever saw was coming one day suddenly over a stile upon the tinker and his niece sitting under a shady bank ; the tinker teaching the golden-haired infant her letters, amid much play and laughter, the grindery standing at ease under a large oak tree hard by, and the one-eyed terrier slumbering in the fleckered shade made by the edge of the foliage : Tim pointing out big T and little t with the stem of his pipe, and explaining how T, i, p, spelt "Tip," the name of the terrier, who cocked his ear, and wagged his tail-stump at each repetition of his name ; while Alice laughed merrily at Tip's astonishment. It was a sight worthy of an artist's pencil. After four years passed thus, a kind friend, good Mrs. Parker, the landlady of the Golden Gudgeon, a quiet little hostelry on

Thames bank, somewhere between Windsor and Reading, offered to take charge of the child, and bring her up as her own—an offer too good to be declined, and Tim for years went once a month to spend a night at the Golden Gudgeon.

Time went on ; it was the period of Moulsey races, and this was some twenty years ago. It was the fashion then for young men sometimes to go over on the Hurst in the evening, long after the racing was over, and see the fun among the gipsies. Tim happened to be passing Hampton on the first day of the races, and being always anxious to utilise the time, went out in the evening to drop two or three eel lines in, on the chance of earning a shilling or two on the morrow. He had finished his job and was dropping gently and noiselessly down the bank at the top of the Hurst, when, some fifty yards or so ahead, he heard the sound of angry voices ; then a scuffle and blows. Tim shouted aloud. Then there was a faint cry of "help" and a splash in the water, and the parties engaged on one side in the scuffle hastily retreated. When Tim came up to the spot only a hat lying on the shore was to be seen. He dropped the boat down some yards, kneeling down and looking along the surface of the water, and suddenly espied something dark and bulky, which surged up in the eddy, and, making a cast with the hitcher which he held ready, by good luck he hooked the object, which proved to be the body of a young man, which he hauled to the shore. Here he soon found that life was not extinct, and that he was only stunned, and Tim soon got him into his boat, poured some spirits down his throat, and

rowed him quickly down to Hampton. The young man had gone over for a lark, had been set on by three gipsies, who sought to rob him. The sound of Tim's voice, however, somewhat disconcerted them, and they only got his watch; his pocket-book and purse, in which were large sums, being fortunately spared. No doubt, stunned as he was, he would have been drowned but for Tim. When he was all right again, an hour or two after, he sent for Tim, and asked how he could serve him, and thanked him very warmly for his timely assistance, which had, he asserted, certainly saved his life. As for the money upon him, which amounted to several hundred pounds, that at least, or any portion that he required, Tim was entitled to; and Tim's friend, who seemed a fine, generous, liberal-hearted young fellow, pulled out his note case, and scattered his bank notes about wildly on the table. Tim, however, only thanked him; but declined at present to take anything. The time might come when he should be glad of a little assistance as a loan perhaps; but at present he wanted for nothing. He would drink his honour's health in a stiff nor-wester of brandy and water, and if he could give him his card, some day when he required aid, he would call on him. From this he could not be stirred; so at length, with the card of Mr. Chas. Cookson, 19A, The Albany, Tim retired.

By this time Alice was eighteen years old, and was perhaps the prettiest girl on the river. She was very useful to good Mrs. Parker, and the house was pretty well affected; but it did not get on so well as it should. It had got into the hands of a niggardly brewer, who

supplied indifferent liquor, and this, of course, sent visitors further afield ; and good Mrs. Parker had little by little got behindhand. She was not quite as active either as she had been a dozen years since, and she was nearly a hundred pounds to the bad. Two or three months after the last incident related Tim found himself again at the Golden Gudgeon. Poor old Mrs. Parker was sadly out of sorts. "Ye see, Mr. Tim," as she always called him, "it ain't no use; how I am to get out o' debt and keep on if Mr. Burrel will send in such rubbishage to call beer as that? Look at it; it's as thick as gutter mud, and as sour as wargin. I can't drink it myself, and how can I expec' others to? People won't stop here for such stuff as that when the Swan at Mumpsford draws as fine a tap o' ale as needs be." "That is true, ma'am," says Tim; "the ale, Mrs. Parker, ma'am, is not what it used to be since Mr. Burbey went out of the business. When it was Burbey and Burrel there was none better; now it's only Burrel and no Burbey, it's hops without malt—indeed, it's quite another thing; and now, ma'am, let me ask you one question, what would it take to free this 'ouse and pay everything off altogether?" Lor, Mr. Tim! why it'd take more nor 300*l.*" "How much more—3 ten, 3 twenty?" "About 3 twenty," says Mrs. Parker. "Then, ma'am, you'll add the name of Tim—or suppose we say 'Co.'—to that there signboard, for I'm a going into partnership, I am. That money 'll be forthcoming, ma'am, on the security of this 'ouse and business. I knows where to get it. Are you agreeable, ma'am? I shall set up my tent here, for I'm tired of wandering. I shan't interfere

with you, ma'am, depend on it. I shall look arter the fishin', which has long been neglected here. It's a capital station for punts and boats. I shall have two or three of each, and there's a young feller as I sees here sometimes as comes from Henley—a friend of Alice's, I think (Alice blushed crimson)—a nice young chap, I think, too, though I don't know his name." Mrs. Parker looked with a merry twinkle in her eye at Alice, who was very busy, laboriously doing nothing to a towel in great confusion. "Yes, young Straker, Jack Straker, you mean, Mr. Tim; he's a very good and honest lad, and has a rare turn for fishing, too." Alice blushed still more, but gave a look full of thanks to her old friend. "Well," continued Tim, "that's just the lad I want; he'll help me look after the fishing, and we'll soon build a bit of a boathouse and a snuggery for him and me here, and I've no doubt we'll be all as happy as crickets, and the old Golden Gudgeon 'll be a rael golden gudgeon after all." And so it was arranged, for both were honest and confiding. Tim's friend lent him 500*l.*; he wanted to give it to him, but that Tim would not have, but he gave the best security he could offer for it, and the old house was rescued from the brewer, and was nicely done up—punts and boats provided, summer houses, smoking arbours, skittle and bowling alleys, bees (which Tim called, in his quaint fashion, "Nature's tinkers") and everything befitting a river-side paradise. But his friend Mr. Cookson did more, he brought small parties of his friends down for a day or two now and then, and the place soon became quite the rage, *les yeux bleus* of Alice adding, no doubt, to the charm of the place.

Anyhow, before another year or two, the Golden Gudgeon began to turn in gold at a pretty good pace, and the borrowed money was soon returned, for Tim would not take it as a gift as Mr. Cookson tried hard to make him. Tim insisted on being independent, so Mr. Cookson had to give way at last, though Tim lost nothing by it in the long run. Tim and young Jack, as his *protégé* was called, worked *con amore* at the fishing, and soon had their hands full, and it was not long before Tim got the withy and rush beds into his hands too, and at the slack times of fishing did a good trade among the basket and chair makers. There is not at this present moment a pleasanter place to sojourn at for a day or two than the Golden Gudgeon. If Mrs. Jack Straker (late Alice Benson) does not make you comfortable, why, I think, you're hard to please; and if Tim does not show you a good day's sport it won't be his fault. Anyhow, if he takes to you, you will enjoy his queer, original chat; for his mind during his wanderings has become somewhat like Touchstone's, and "has strange places crammed—with observations." There is one thing they do not encourage, and that is roystering and brawling. "The cup that cheers but not inebriates" is the cup that they like their customers to enjoy, whether it be in the parlour, the little snug bar, the smoking-room, where Tim holds forth while tackle-making or mending; in the yew-tree arbour, where old tales are told and fishing adventures related; or in the punt chair, where business engrosses him, Tim will always advise you, like Izaak Walton, to "study to be quiet."

THE PLEASURES OF GRAYLING FISHING.

"I did once take, upon the 6th day of December, one and only one of the biggest graylings, and the best in season, that ever I yet saw or tasted."—COTTON.

I HAVE fished for grayling in many waters, both in England and on the Continent. For size I think the Hampshire rivers bear the palm away, since fish of three pounds weight are there common, and I have often had two or three of that weight in my basket on the same day, while two-pounders are looked on quite as ordinary fish, and even fish of four pound have now and then come to hook. Shropshire, however, bears away the palm for numbers of good, takeable fish of from a pound to a pound and a half. In Derbyshire the fish, as a rule, are smaller, though, perhaps, even more plentiful. In Germany they are abundant, but do not often run above two pounds, and not commonly so large as that. But, wherever they are found, to my mind, they are most exceedingly welcome. With September our trout fishing closes, as a rule, and in some places with August; but then commences the best of the grayling season, and all through the winter, whenever the weather is soft and

mild, or the sun-glint brings up the fly, capital fly-fishing for grayling may be enjoyed. And how pleasant it is on a fine October day, or even later on, when the trees have shed their leaves, and the feathery tracery of their thousand twigs and branches networks the sky away on the horizon ; when the night dews gem the grass like diamonds on every blade, when the water seems to take an extra sparkle from the clear blue sky, and the insects hum upwards into life, under the delusion that spring is upon them ! What a delightful sensation it is to roam beside the river after some weeks absence, inhaling the fresh, grateful air, with springy step, and humming the last new melody, in pure joyousness of spirit ! Thus, as you go, you note each stream and pool, and mark well its condition. This one is a trifle too high to fish well till you come down to the tail, to-day ; that is just in right order ; and there, too, you note the dimples made by the shy umbra, as he sucks in the willow flies and duns. Yonder, in that eddy under the bank, now, is a good fish, Mr. Novice ; he has risen three times while you have been standing there. Try him ! With careful step and pliant rod, you approach, and, with a wave, send the line across the stream. The flies hover for a moment over the spot, and then are swept away down stream, but no rise answers your invitation, and the fish ceases promptly from rising altogether. Why is this ? What is the reason ? The cast was deftly made ; there was no bungle in it. Whence, then, this sudden alarm and sudden cessation ? Well, scholar, I will tell thee. Dost thou not see that that fish lieth in an eddy, as most big grayling do if they

can get into one? The flies your fish was taking were brought round by the eddy under the bank, and were, when taken, moving in the direction of up the stream, whereas yours, as soon as they had pitched on the water, were swept downwards against the current of the eddy, and this unusual motion has alarmed your fish. Seek you out another better placed, and note well all such points as these in future; you will find them useful in grayling fishing. And so, luck attend you! May your creel weigh heavy to-night!

DEAR F.,

The river is settling down nicely, and about next week will be in fine order. Chiffin writes me word that one or two fairish dishes have been made by some of the members already, though the water is yet full high; but I shall run down to Hopshire on Monday evening. I have written to Burton to keep a couple of beds, and if you will meet me at 2.15 at Paddington, we shall get to our journey's end, by favour of that excellent and well-managed railway, the G.W., by 9.30, sooner or later—thus with luck, achieving the grand total of 130 miles in seven hours and a half, to the satisfaction of the directors, I suppose, and the intense enjoyment of the passengers; whether we might not do it in a little over half the time or no is another matter. However, I have a new tap of regalias, Madura Brobbingnagios, three of which will about compass it. Ben Church and little Tim Duffer are going down to Caistown to shoot by the same train, so we will have a rubber and pass the time somehow. So no more at present from yours affectionately—

SARAH.

“From Tom Bedell,” I exclaimed, as I turned the letter over previous to investigating its contents. Dear old Sarah, what a good fellow he is, and what a fine fisherman! can tie a fly like—no *almost* like Mrs. O. Smith, no relation to the great “wreck

ashore" O. Smith of our youth, but daughter of the clever artificer of floaters who hails from Cheltenham, and who knows how to use as well as how to make them; as for Tom he can spin a weir like old Bill Wisdom; can throw a salmon fly like Pat Hearn, and can beat Sandy the switcher at his own game; shoots nearly as well as Gannon used to, and spars like an angel. His nickname "Sarah" was acquired by his having thrashed, in about three rounds, a coster who was ill-using a child. "S'elp me greens, mate," said the peripatetic tradesmen to a friend as he put on his jacket, with an enlarged lip and two eyes in deep mourning, "I thought the swell was a sleepy cove, he was so quiet over it; but he 'its—ah, he 'its!—as straight and as 'ard as our Sarah," a lady evidently of renown in domestic pugilistic circles.

The next eighteen or twenty hours—allowing for eating, drinking, and sleeping—were devoted by me to putting things in order. I wanted some whirling duns, half a dozen willows, and a few red tags and bumbles, so I walked down to Farlow's and got them, with a nice light cast or two, not of drawn gut, which I always avoid. I left various directions as to various matters of business, &c.; stowed all that I required; and at 2.20 on the following day I was seated opposite little Tim Duffer, who had just turned up the two of hearts. What rubbers we played, and what chat we chatted, matters nothing; at Caistown our rubber broke up; after that we each took forty winks, then we woke up and lighted fresh weeds, and in good time reached Chipping Croxton. Here host Burton's shandrydan met us, and a three-mile drive deposited

us at the door of the Grayling Inn, a very appropriate name, for our hostelry was situated on the banks of one of the finest grayling streams in England. It gave fine troutting in the summer, did the Muck, but it was at its best in the month of October; and then, what baskets of grayling I have seen taken out of it! what pounders and two-pounders!—only these latter are more often the prey of the deadly grasshopper than the fly. The club consists of ten members, of whom Tom Bedell is one. They can take a friend out with them a certain number of times, each member having a score of tickets annually for friends. These tickets are not transferable during two weeks in the year—that is, during the first week of the Mayfly and the first week in October—the club being mostly keen fishers, mustering strongly at those seasons, and strangers being then excluded. The grasshopper is limited in its use, or the grayling would soon be all but cleaned out of any stream if it were habitually used, as most persons who know what a deadly bait it is in skilful hands will be disposed to admit. Each member has four tickets for grasshopper fishing, which he can use himself or give to a friend, and even with this the slaughter of big grayling is often tremendous. I have seen a 25lb. creel filled twice in a day, and hardly a grayling under 1lb.; so that it will be seen that the practice requires strict regulating. Only one member was down at Slocum Pogis, as our ville was named, and he had a little cottage hard by, where he rented a couple of rooms yearly; so that Tom and I had the Grayling to ourselves. Burton had been butler and handy man to one of the presidents of the

club. The taps were excellent, things were very well attended to there, and there were few places where you could be better done-for in a quiet way than the Grayling. The host and hostess attended to everything—Burton's wife having been cook in a London hotel for a time—so that one ate one's meals in security and confidence; and thus we were in clover, having the house to ourselves. Our sitting room opened from a French window (in the summer) on to the lawn, which was tastefully decked with shrubs, and led down to the river. Old-fashioned flowers were everywhere at the right season; now the chrysanthemums, late dahlias, and China roses were all we could boast of. The house had been an angling inn so long that the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, and all sorts of old mementoes and old associations and traditions were kept up. Here is the old boots, porter, knife-cleaner, lunch carrier, and general factotum of the Grayling.

“This is Sir Thomas's pool, yer honour, and is called after him. That was before the club was formed—that was. Here Sir Thomas killed sixteen trout in the Mayfly season on the glorious first of June—day of Lord 'Owe's vict'ry, yer honour, as you may see by the hallmanack in the 'all, yer honour, which my own father lost his harm in, yer honour, an' 'ad a pension, an' lived at Grennidge, and sarved his country grateful—sixteen trout, as weighed thirty-two pound exact, for I was a young man then, and weighed 'em, and it ain't ever have been done never since. Nor . won't,” he adds, slowly, “no, not till there's another Boney and another Lord 'Owe's victory on the first of

June. Just by that further arch of the bridge, sir, was caught that there fab'lous big trout, the biggest ever heer'd on any veres. Colonel All-port cotched him, he did, and his likeness is over the mantel in yer honour's settin' room. Twenty inches and a 'alf, and weighed six and a three-quarter pound and a hounce." There was a black paper figure of the fish, touched up by a local artist, in a glass case over our mantelpiece. "And out of that 'ole, yer honour, where it's swirling under the willow, Councillor Keelhaul cotched the biggestest graylin' ever seen in this stream, or any other, four pound and three-quarters. That was only seventeen year back. With a wasp grub it was; 'ad him first swim. 'What'e got there, Keelhaul?' says old Hadmiral Surtout, who was a midshipman in Capting Ross's hexpedition, and used to tell tremengis stories 'bout the North Pole. 'One o' your whales, hadmiral,' says the Councillor, a trying to get the fish in the net. 'Gad's worms, sir, it must be the one as swalley'd Joney then, for he's thund'rin' old by the look of him,' says the hadmiral, a larfin' fit to split." And so on, and so on. Yonder is the old yew tree seat, carved into a shell, with a presiding peacock in front of it, laden with three cheeses monstrously growing out of its back, with a fourth one representing a new generation of anglers in progress. What care has been bestowed on that old yew by tender and reverent hands, who trained up its shoots in the way they should go! What endless pipes have been smoked there! What tankards of nut-brown ale and jorums of cold punch have been disposed of! What pleasant communings on piscatory matters have

been held by the *senior anglers* of past generations ! One can fancy (so little are the surroundings changed) that one sees the sober garb, the long-flapped coat, the well-combed wig, the high boots of bygone days, holding sweet converse, or singing a catch, under the old tree still. And yon old, old apple tree, moss-grown and lichen-clad—into the mouths of how many generations of urchins has it dropped its apples ! And the grey old church, too, with its soothing chimes—how many generations of the rude forefathers of the hamlet have they chimed into life and tolled out of it ! How many joyful marriage peals have made glad hearts now still, or resolved again to earth beneath the green sod in the quiet churchyard.

Regard, too, the old settle at the door, or the red curtains in the tap-room, behind which many a fine old poacher has colloqued with his friends as to how they should dodge the keepers, who has since founded a family in Australia, going out there for his country's good and his own, owing to some little irregularity in mutton. And then—the pride of the Grayling—the visitors' commonplace book of the inn, which no gold would buy, which is zealously watched and guarded, and which contains a name or two not unknown—notably that of one Horatio Nelson, a sailor who was thought something of in his day, though his practice is regarded as effete and obsolete by the great captains of the present generation. His plan was to keep his own ships afloat, and to sink the enemy's ; but then he was a selfish man, who did not understand the virtues of self-sacrifice, and, happily, his unchristian doctrines are exploded. Then there was one Humphrey

Davy, a chemist and druggist, who dealt in lamps, and called them safety lamps ; but that, of course, was the puff of the period. Also is the name of a stonemason chap, Francis Chantrey, down there — a tombstone carver—a good fisherman, though, who could chisel the trout and grayling out as well as funeral mottoes. And, later on, there is a straggling signature, which, on close inspection, we make out to be that of John Leech, “the great characterurist,” as our friend the boots, showman, &c., described him, “and who actily sketched him off one day for a picter in that ’ere *Punch* paper, witch he add him there exactly six weeks arter, and we ’as the picter now ;” and many others of lesser moment. Here, too, is the old barometer that hundreds of anglers have tapped in their time ; and then the old clock on the stairs, that has ticked and ticked I don’t know how many thousands or hundreds of thousands of hours, and has so often chimed up impatient anglers, keen as their own hook points, ere daybreak. And the old book case, with a few old bound numbers of the *Sporting Mag.*, and two or three old angling books, Moses Browne’s Walton, with the plates—wonderful absurdities—or Hoffland and Blaine, and so forth. And the two easy chairs on either side of the fire, fitted to the frame by long sitting-in—what anglers have used them ! We have sat in them, have taken our several toddies, smoked our pipes, gone to bed in sheets smelling of lavender, slept like tops, waked, tubbed, looked at the river, breakfasted on fresh grayling, deliciously browned, devilled kidneys, and streaky bacon with a Cochin egg, and some watercress to wind up with. Chiffinch,

the keeper, has put our rods together, we have lighted our matutinal weed, the flasks are filled, the lunch put up, there is a large bottle of beer, and two lads to carry our traps, and off we start.

As we stand on the old stone bridge, of course we peep over. No angler ever yet crossed a bridge without peeping over ; he couldn't. There are one or two late-feeding trout of half a pound or so visible, and feeding slowly. But the bigger ones are keeping house in the deep water below, out of which, in another month or so, they would push on to the ford for matrimonial purposes. Just at the end of the sharp, where the rough merges into the smooth in a few big eddies, one or two quiet rises betoken the grayling on the feed.

"Yon's a good one, Chiffinch, that farther one nearest the deep water."

"'Bout a pound and a haif ; I seed 'un yes'day ; ye'll get abreast of him just above the pollard ;" and Chiffinch, who had a long spare bamboo rod over his shoulder, strode on to open the gate.

The bridge was a double arched one, and on the near side the stream flowed through, rushing down along the footing of the arch a good deep swirling holding stream, a place, indeed, to hold first-rate fish, and it was rarely without one ; and in May, one never neglected to drop a fly on the smooth bit just above the bridge pier before the stream divided, for there was always a chance in it. For if one good fish was caught, another succeeded to it without delay. It was a first-rate victualling yard, with a safe hold behind it.

That's where the Colonel caught his big fish, "as you may have 'eered on in history," as Mr Weller remarked. It was rather a downey trick—the Colonel laid a dozen of wine that he would catch the fish with fair rod and line within a week. The fish had been hooked half a score of times by one bait and another, and knew them all full well; he had got off in a variety of ways, mostly by running between a sunk post and the wall of the bridge arch, when he generally forced a draw, if he did not make a large break, and the result of his experience was that he was proof to bait. Worm, minnow, grasshopper, fly, were all of no use, he knew them all well. So the Colonel collogued an old female who used to bring fish over from Chipping Croxton through the village, and got her, every day for a week, to pitch a handful of shrimps over the bridge into the water as she passed, and before the week was out our fat friend below took the new bait greedily. Two nights before the day of performance the Colonel went out with his waders on; coming back in about an hour rather wet; he had been up the stream, cutting off some overhanging branches—which spoilt one of his best casts, and had slipped into the water partially; so he said. The next morning, the Colonel proceeded to the bridge, accompanied only by his netsman, and the other party to the wager, for he wouldn't have a crowd near him, and so the rest of the party stood far off, and looked on as best they could. Arriving on the bridge, he looked over cautiously, resting the rod along the coping, and holding the line and hook in his hand so as not to alarm the fish. There lay his intended prey, anxiously

expecting his morning shrimp. The Colonel dropped a shrimp; the big trout rose and took it with a thoroughly business-like air, and then looked about for more; another dropped, and he took that too; but there was a hook in that one, and soon the Colonel's rod was bending double over the coping. After a desperate rally up stream, and across once or twice, the fish seemed to make up his mind, and down he went under the arch.

"Now he'll do you," said his friend.

"Not he," said the Colonel, with a confident smile on his face.

"He will; by Jove he will. He'll get round that awkward post; that's just how he beat Charley Venables and Tom Porter."

"Bet you another dozen he don't," said the Colonel.

"Done with you; but take care, my dear fellow, do take care. Now he's off; now he makes for it. I wouldn't see you lose that fish for any number of dozens of champagne! Hallo! Why, here he comes up through the arch again; missed his tip seemingly." The Colonel played him with great skill and patience, and after another short fight above, the fish made down through the arch and took out line; once more, after a scurry round, he came up again—this time slow, and down on his luck; and after another turn or two, the fish seeming all abroad, Archy, the Colonel's man, who stood ready up to his knees in the water below, netted him. There was great rejoicing, and huge admiration among the crowd who now came up to inspect.

"Well, I've lost my wine," said his friend; but how the deuce the fish didn't plant you in that post I can't think; he fought hard enough for it."

"So he did, my friend," said the Colonel, "so he did. I admit it freely; but—it wasn't there; I sawed it off two nights ago, for I thought it had been there long enough."

"Sold again!" cried his friend. "Never mind, Colonel, we'll drink your health in the wine to-night at all events." And that's how the big trout was caught.

But here we are. "Now, Chiffinch, what cast have you got up for me?"

"Red tag, silver dun, and bumble; always likes them, so does graylin's. For Muster F. I've put up a little yellow dun, a furnace, and a willow, and six better flies at this time o' year *there ain't*, not on this river. Now, sir, cast where you see'd that big 'un; he ain't put up lately, but he's below a scratchin' his head with his tail, and thinkin' o' breakfast, for they don't feed werry early at this time o' year."

Tom let out line, and after wetting it once or twice up stream, put out seventeen or eighteen yards as straight as a rule, and allowed the flies to float down stream. There was the faintest possible dimple in the water, nothing to call a rise in trout-fishing parlance, but it was enough. Tom raised the point of the rod some six or eight inches, and experienced considerable resistance. Then the line cut the water rapidly; it was evident a big grayling was on. Soon he came tumbling and rolling like a whale in a flurry on the surface.

"Gently, gently; so ho! The hook is very wee,

wee, and these big graylings are as tender in the mouth as an unbitted colt. So ho ! steady—that's better," quoth Tom, as the fish took again to running. Nearer and nearer he was worked to the shore ; for cautious play is the order of the day, and in time skill was rewarded by seeing a fine pound and a half grayling in the net. " Took the red tag," quoth Chiffinch, " it's all a good fly for grayling."

" N°. 1 ; what a beauty he is ! like a bar of silver spotted black," said Tom, quite panting with excitement over his first fish. " Let's wet him by all means —no luck without ;" and the solemn ceremony was performed and the fish duly creeled.

" Now then, F., do you go down to the next bend below the gate and fish that reach down carefully, it is about the best on the river ; and when you come to that long, swirly hole below the plank bridge, give it a turn with the grasshopper. There are some tall grayling in it usually, but they do not rise well at the fly. Chiffinch has all the materials, and will go and show you the cunning casts, and we will meet at the weir and lunch, as I shall cross at the plank bridge and fish down the other side, and come over to you at the weir ; after which we'll fish down to Podgington Bridge, where the trap will be waiting for us."

As I always obey orders, particularly when I find them so satisfactory as these, I stumped off, followed by Chiffinch and my lad, leaving Tom to a long, heavy reach of water.

" Now, sir, don't forget the banks ; allers try under the banks at this time o' year. The best graylin' often lies there ; and if you sees your line tighten

or stop as it rolls down stream, even for the forty-fifth of a second, strike, never mind about seein' no rise nor nothin', strike; you needn't strike 'ard, just a slight twitch, that's all, and don't be too rough with 'em. They're tender-mouthed critters is big graylin'. It ain't like trout fishin'. You wants to have twice the h'eye on yer line, or you'll miss 'alf your rises. Ah, there he was; you didn't touch him. Try him again. A graylin' if he don't taste the fly 'll rise half a dozen times sometimes, and then fasten arter all, though they rises more falser earlier than they does now when they're a feedin'." A grayling had risen at me in mid-stream and refused. I covered him again, and again he came, and this time I held him.* He was something near three-quarters of a pound, and after the usual tumbling, &c., we netted and bagged him to the willow.

"Ah, you didn't see that one," said Chiffinch, as my line stopped for the ghost of a second as if caught in an eddy, though there was hardly any sign of a rise on the surface. I confessed, to my shame, that I did not, and two minutes after the same thing occurred a few yards lower. "Ah, *they're* artful old beggars, they is," said Chiffinch; "pounders an' over, I've seed 'em several times; but now, take care, there's a good 'un at the corner of them stakes;" and as the line once more checked, and a slight whirl showed on the water, expectant, eager, and excited, I struck

* Grayling will frequently rise at and refuse the wet fly. When this has happened, I have rarely found them after a few minutes' interval refuse the dry one.

as though I had hold of a salmon rod, and—"Confound it, he's taken the fly, I really believe."

"Well, you wos a little rough on 'im for a pound and a halfer. Yes, the willer is gone'd. I thort so. Never mind, we'll soon put on another." I groaned over the loss, and abused myself.

"It didn't matter, sir ; it's mostly the case with gents as is trout fishers. Don't you lose no temper. You'll get into yer batting when you've lost a rise and a fly or two, and then you won't lose no more." And I soon found that Chiffinch had reason, for after another mull or two, and one more sharp strike that nearly, but not quite, lost me a niceish fish, I got into the style, and landed three or four fish without a fault. When we reached the foot bridge we stopped, and Tom came stalking down to us. He is a mighty walker, and never wastes a minute when on the river side, but fishes hard while he is about it, walks hard when he has to make from point to point, and so is uncommonly hard to beat. He is rather proud of his walking powers, and when he was up shooting in Perthshire some years since he tackled his head keeper, who was a noted Highland pedestrian in that part of the country. "Now, Sandy," said he one afternoon, when they were some twenty miles from the Lodge, "I hear that you are a mighty man at walking. Now then, look here ; we're about twenty miles from the Lodge, and we'll just make a stretch right away for it across country, fair heel and toe walking, and see who gets there first. If you do I'll give you a couple of sovereigns." And they started. For many miles they made a capital match of it ; but

beef and beer stayed better than oatmeal and whisky, and at the eighteenth mile Tom began to draw ahead, and at the nineteenth walked right away from him. Sandy got his couple of sovereigns nevertheless, and Tom gained great *κύδος* from it; but when he accidentally mentioned some time after that his grandmother's aunt was a MacTavish of MacTavish, it was all accounted for, and he might have done anything short of murder in an area of some twenty square miles thereabouts without much question.

"Now then, Chiffinch, try that hole with the grasshopper, and just show Mr. F. the working of it;" whereupon the keeper took a small box out of his pocket, in which were half a dozen hooks, with a plummet of lead on the shank about the size and shape of a small narcissus root, and wound about all over with yellow, green, and red wool; lapping this on to a yard of gut, he fixed on a small bit of white quill some five feet or so up the line, and then sticking half a dozen gentles or maggots on the hook bend, just as he said, to give it a flavour, he dropped it into the eddy, and allowed it to sink to the bottom; and then kept on jerking it up from the bottom some six or eight inches, and drawing it this way and that way to cover and search the ground thoroughly, and never leaving any slack line in the water. The rod was moderately stiff—almost as stiff as an ordinary bait rod, and pretty long. The white quill was to indicate when the bait touched the bottom. Every now and then Chiffinch made a short, quick strike, when he thought a fish touched the bait. "Allers strike on suspicion, sir—never wait; the moment you feels any resistance,

strike, or you'll be too late. Ah, would you ? Try that again, now. There, I said so ! " and Chiffinch hooked and played a very fine grayling of $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb. The rod was stiff, however, the tackle stout, the hook large —about 4 or 5 at least—the grayling hadn't the ghost of a chance, and was hauled out kicking. Then he hooked another of about the same size. Then I took the rod, and missed one or two that I thought were weeds at the bottom ; and then a strike and a tug from a heavy fish made me aware that I had a large one on ; and, though he played for some time heavily, and tried the tackle, he hadn't a chance, and a lovely grayling of an ounce over 2lb. was at length done to death. The eddy was a large one ; the river ran down like a salmon stream in the throat of the pool, and former floods had worn a great wall away in the marly bank below, and between this and the stream was some twenty feet or more of water, about six feet or seven feet deep, over which eddies constantly whirled and rolled ; and, as the eddy ran along for some twenty yards—in the midst of which a small ditch ran in, a very favourite lay—it held a good stock of fish, and took some time to fish it. It was always, early in the season, good for four or five fish every time you fished it, and sometimes more. So I went on, and, next feeling a touch at the line, I struck sharply and hooked a fish, which ran out into the heavy stream and played furiously ; but I soon saw that he was hooked foul—a common occurrence in this kind of fishery, as I have seen lots of grayling at the end of the season torn in the side, where they had broken away from the hook. We landed the fish, however, and he proved a

pound ; after which I got one more, and the eddy was fished out when I resumed the fly. In the meantime the sun had peeped out, and the fly had evidently changed, for when I covered two or three rising fish they declined my offers. Accordingly I looked carefully to the edges of the stream, and presently I saw two or three flies come down one after the other, which, however, were all out of reach. Following them down, however, one was caught in an eddy, and just as he was wheeling round, and likely to come within my reach, a twopenny-halfpenny shut grayling whipped up and took him down. At length, however, I did get one out, and found it was a dark-coloured spinner, with light clear wings. The fly which I had nearest to it was a light-winged quill gnat, which was a very good likeness. This I put over the three recusants before noted, and two out of the three put in an appearance directly and received judgment. After this we came to a lot of swift, rough trout water, which it was useless to fish ; and then we walked on over a marshy bit, flushing five or six snipe and a couple of wild duck, to a beautiful streamy clear reach about three deep, where the grayling were rising freely. I got here a good one of $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and four or five of $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. ; but I found the fish rather shyer there, as the water was more open and clearer, and the fish often rose two or three times without taking, but the dry fly soon brought them to hook, and I did pretty well here. Then I got hung up in a bush on the other side, out of which nothing but a break could save me ; so I broke, sent Chiffinch round over the weir bridge to retrieve the cast, which he did, and in the meantime I

set to and put up a new cast, after which, as it was close on lunch time, I sauntered to the weir, where I found Tom seated in a snug corner with a cold hand of pickled pork, some home-baked bread, a chunk of Stilton cheese, a couple of late lettuces, and a big jar of Bass, to all of which we respectfully paid our attention. Lunch and pipe despatched, we once more resumed our rods. With the exception of a short bite here and there for a mile or more, the water was rattling and sharp, chiefly trout water, when we came to another reach or two of grayling water, out of which both Tom and I picked up a few fish ; but they did not rise as well as they did in the morning. We changed flies, but the fish were off. Some heavy clouds came up, and looked like rain. One or two more holes I tried with the grasshopper, and picked up two or three good fish ; but even at that bait they fell off, and when we reached the bridge at last and found the trap waiting for us, we were quite ready for it, and both our creels showed signs of plethora. On reaching home we turned them out. Tom had thirteen brace, and I had ten and a half ; but, thanks to the grasshopper, I had, on the whole, a better show as regards size, many of his barely topping $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., and only one, the first he caught, touching $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. As we reached home it began to spit with rain, but we did not regard it. A good wash and a good dinner to follow, with a comfortable toddy and a weed after, made us perfectly happy ; we hadn't a care. "Oh. the joys of angling ;" "Oh, the sweet contentment ;" "Oh, the gallant fisher's life," &c. ; but as we went up to bed we heard the rain pattering smartly against the windows.

"Clear off 'fore twelve, boun' to," mumbled Tom sleepily; "little colour in the water to-morrow." But alas! my brother piscators, how often does "hope tell a flattering tale!" In the splendid language of the great Dr. Johnson, though he did make a wretched "goak" about anglers, "Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow, attend to the history of" two unfortunate fishermen on the banks of the Muck. It rained hard all night, and when we woke it was raining still. The river was up eight or ten inches, the streams all out of order, and, what was worse, the nasty little Chew had shot; and, as it runs all through clay lands, the river was like gutter mud. Our faces were very blue, but not so blue as Chiffinch's; for there would be no fishing for quite a week even if the rain held off, and that was many half-crowns out of that worthy keeper's pocket. Accordingly, as there was nothing else for it, we paid our bill, ordered the trap to catch the ten o'clock train, and in eight hours were back in Babylon.

And this is the worst of grayling fishing; you are so often flooded out. Two years ago a friend, who belongs to a regular grayling club, asked me to go with him. I couldn't at the time, so he went alone, had 130 miles journey down into Shropshire, and when he got there, found that it had rained the night before, was raining then, and the river wouldn't be in order for a week; so he went his 130 miles, back again, without wetting a line; and that is by no means a solitary case.

WILL WHISTLE.

“A man he was to all the country DEAR.”

“WHAT! don’t you know Will Whistle? Lor? I thought everybody knew Will Whistle. Why, he’s so well known in this part of the country, that the story *is* told of him that if you addressed a letter to him, ‘Will Whistle, anybody’s house in Dampshire but his own,’ it would be sure to find him.”

“Really; but what is our friend William? What is his occupation? what does he do that he is so well known?”

“What *is* he? Why, everything. He’s—well—oh, he’s—well, I don’t—why—Here Jems, what *is* Mr. Whistle?”

Jems (*loquitur*): “What’s Mister Whistle! Why, he’s Mr. Whistle. I never ‘eerd as he was anythink else.”

“Just so; but what is his position, or what does he do for a living, then?”

“Do? Well, he does for a good many, in a genteel kind of way, I never heerd o’ anyone a-doing of him, though.”

“Any estate?”

Jems shakes his head and looks dubious. “Not as

I ever heerd tell on ; not what you med call regler. He might have, in course, but not here away. He might own Snobfield Common in a way o' speakin', on'y it's a common ye see, and what's a common can't be called private."

"Property ?"

"Well, he've got the Bungeylow and—and—the powney, and them dawgs, and—and an-cetrer. But"—and a sort of quavering indistinct conclusion insinuated a doubtful, undefined estimate of Mr. Whistle's further belongings. "But," said Jems, brightening up, as if after all this was the main point, "he's a wery nice gen'l'man, and knows a good deal, he do. Lor ! what he knows you'd 'ardly believe.

"In what way, now ?"

"Well, well, say farriery now ; there ain't a vet fur nor near as knows more nor he do, not one of 'em ; and then weights and performances and 'andicappin, its A B C to him. If you wants to know the winner of a Derby or a Chester Cup say, any time this twenty year, there ye are ; 'e've a-got it all in his 'ead, logged down in-fallimel. Likewise who rode him, and who ran second and third. And dawgs ! Lord love ye ! dawgs is second natur to him. And at cards or any kind o' game, he's that knowledgeable that no bench o' bishops in the land could equal him. At cricket, and shootin' too, Lord bless ye, he was borned wi' a bat in one 'and and a gun in t'other, I du believe. As for farmin' and crops and stock, and all that, in a amatoorin' and genteel way, he can talk to a farmer, ay, and deal wi' him, as you wouldn't believe. He don't 'unt so much as he used ; but I'm

told that as a young 'un, with the Wangleby hounds, he was always there or thereabouts ; and even now he knows every litter o' cubs far and near. But he got a hurt in a stiplechase some years agone as spiled his riding. But you be a-goin' to 'The Dene,' sir, and you're sure to meet him there ; for that's one of his 'ouses, and he drove that way three hours ago, and he always sleeps where he dines." "And breakfastys there next morning," adds Tummus, my first interlocutor, significantly. "And it is'nt nowise certain he don't dine there again the day after. But your hoss is ready, sir. A shillin' for the bate, sir. Thank'ye, sir. All right, Jems ! Let her go." And I drove out of the yard of that capital old hostelry, the Lion of Linstock, where I had stopped to refresh after a fifteen-mile spin.

I was going to spend a day or two with my old friend Dr. Dandriff, of The Dene, in the pleasant village of Snobfield, and, in discourse with the head ostler and an assistant as to the surrounding country, had gathered the above. Another half-dozen of miles or so landed me at The Dene, and there I found a pleasant party, including Will Whistle, and a hearty welcome. Our friend Will was a well-preserved gentleman of a certain age, slightly verging into the chinchilla shade as to his hair. He was a fresh-coloured man, nearly clean shaved, with very short mutton-chop whiskers, and a longish, flexible, crafty upper lip, that looked as if it was always feeling about for something to nibble ; very good and white teeth, if they were his own, about which one seemed somehow to have a doubt ; a high old-fashioned tie ; loose

but well-made clothes, faultless boots and gloves, and always a good hat, which he held to be the outward and visible signs of a gentleman, as do a good many other people. He limped slightly in his walk. So much for his personal appearance. He was always polite, and even *empressé* with ladies, and he gained a certain amount of tolerance from a good many, but by no means from all. Bless the sex ; they were mostly far too straightforward in one sense, and too apt to judge by their sympathy in another, to take Will Whistle unreservedly into their confidence. They accepted his politeness, and were on their side equally polite. He was often useful, very much so, and they put up with him ; but you rarely heard a woman give a very good word of Will Whistle. Now and then one who did not know the old bachelor would make an attack upon his too susceptible heart ; but he was a rank irreconcilable, and was soon dropped like a hot potato.

In a country house among men he was a useful visitor ; he knew every county family, and all their connections and business, for forty miles round. He had ways of knowing, and never forgot or divulged a secret save when he'd a purpose to serve, and then—well, then he knew how to do it to the best advantage. He was always welcome, notwithstanding. He rounded a party off, as it were—filled up the chinks—and, though he was not a great talker nor a professed story-teller, he remembered everything, and somehow things always went off glibly and smartly when he was present. He seemed instinctively to drop here and there the few sentences which were suited to

the principal guests, whom it was his interest to cultivate, and which brought them on the *tapis* in their best form ; then he became a courteous and interested listener. He was the most skilful toady I ever met. He never buttered a man coarsely unless he was a small man, and then it was more by way of a sneer, and for the amusement of bigger people. At this kind of performance he was tolerably clever ; but he sometimes burnt his fingers at it, as it is a peculiarly exasperating form of entertainment to the victim ; and if, as once or twice happened, the party practised on turned on him resolutely, he had to shut up, for he was not thoroughbred. It was curious, though, how the servants all, from the highest to the lowest, paid him deference and attention, and yet I don't believe he ever parted with a copper to any of them. But no one's pony, when brought out of the yard, was better done than Will's ; no one's bed room was more carefully attended to ; no one got a better corner at the covert side ; and, whoever else went without game, it wasn't Will Whistle. The biggest hare and the cleanest brace of birds, and an odd rabbit or a pigeon or two, by way of a make-weight, would be sure to be found in his cart when he reached his bungalow. The fact was, though he did not dispense much mouey, he gave them "tips" and helps of various kinds, which were worth it. He was very partial to good eating and drinking, though he treated his digestion with all manner of consideration, and neither multiplied his viands nor his drinks ; but what he did take was, if he could procure it, the best of its kind. Sherry, port, and Madeira were his only wines. He never touched

fizz or spirits, and of those three wines there wasn't a better judge in Dampshire. He never talked wine much ; but you were always safe in drinking out of the same decanter as Will. I used to rile him horribly, when I got to know him better, by asking, "What wine are you drinking, Mr. Whistle ? Ah ! sherry, eh ? Thank you, I don't care if I do—just one. Thanks. Ah !" with a nod of approval, "that'll do," and I never left it. Ten to one it was fine old East India, or something of that sort. He would look at me across the table as if he wished it would choke me, as no doubt he did.

I once chanced to overhear a short consultation, which ran thus : "If I nod to you as I ride up the course, you can put on a couple of sovs safely, Bousfield." "Thank ye, sir, thank ye, Mr. Whistle ; I'm sure you're very kind, sir ; and—oh, by the way, sir, I nearly forgot it, but the old '47 is on to-day, sir." "Ah, really ! Good morning, Bousfield." I said nothing, but I had some of that old '47 myself, and ever after I followed Will's line.

He was a very good and careful whist-player, and was skilful in cutting in. He won on the balance a comfortable little something yearly, though he never played high ; he went upon a snug little system of never losing more than a certain fixed sum ; when he reached that limit he considered that his luck was not worth following up. His winnings were not so restricted. Of course, he did not admit this, but I found it out by patience and putting two and two together. He had a wonderful facility for making everyone he had to do with more or less useful or

profitable to him, in some fashion or other. No matter how small the consideration, a man, in Will's eyes, was always good for something if properly used. How to effect this was his one great study. In a radius of twenty miles or so round "the Bungalow" were many comfortable places of resort, and he went from one to the other with great skill and judgment. He never bored his entertainers or came at inconvenient times, and never stayed without a hearty invitation. There was always a reason for his being in the neighbourhood—some races or coursing, or a big shoot or a cricket match, or something in which he was sure to be somebody, and therefore mostly welcome. He had a sweet little thoroughbred pony, that could do anything but talk, and she picked up a stake here and a cup there, and something worth having elsewhere, besides drawing his neat little cart about, and earned her oats nobly, with something to spare. He had a retrieving setter whose sagacity was something demoniac. "Rags," as he was called, was more infallible than the Pope himself. Then he had a brace of greyhounds, which were quite good enough to win money on, even if they failed to collar the stakes, over the local eight and sixteen dogs stakes in that and the next county; and, if they went into anything bigger, Will knew their form to a pound, and *the money* came home somehow. His betting was of the modest order; but it far more often came off right than wrong. Then, if anyone wanted a dog or a horse, Will knew exactly where to get what he wanted; in fact, he knew pretty well every horse and dog in the county, and bought and sold a good many,

always at a profit, and no one could ever lay a bad swindle at his door. "My dear sir, I bought the dog at Tankester, of George Walker, for eight sovereigns; give me a ten-pound note, and he's yours, and you'll never regret it." Or "The pony was knocked down to me at Chousenham's for twenty-seven guineas less the shillings. Write me a cheque for 35*l.*, and if he don't suit you in a week's time I'll take him back and split the difference." "Small profits and quick returns" suited Will and his friends likewise. So it was with everything else. "Want some pigs? Got three I'll sell you, pure Berkshire; bought 'em yesterday. Give me a sov. for buying, and my man shall put them in the sty." In this way Mr. Whistle's modest expenses were provided for handsomely, even though his estate was non-existent. "Ten per cent. per week on capital" was, as Will said, "winning."

The Bungalow was originally a four-roomed keeper's cottage, very prettily situated on the edge of Snobfield Common, which was an open space of seventy or eighty acres, on which commoners fed their donkeys, &c. The cottage belonged to Sir George Chesswass, who had moved his keeper to a more convenient spot, and didn't want it. Will got the cottage out of him for a service of some sort which he did him, with the shooting over the common in perpetuity. A timber vessel was wrecked some miles off on the coast, and Will bought a lot of the wrecked cargo for a song, got a farmer or two to draw it for him for a similar consideration, made his own plans, worked in the local carpenter, and, with the assistance of his own man, a regular Jack-of-all-trades, he added three or four

other rooms, all on the ground floor, decorated them tastefully with all manner of rare old sporting prints, picked up all over the country, touched up and improved sheds and stables, put a rail up all round, and subsequently converted it into a fence, whereby certain patches of the common, in all, perhaps, about one acre, were included in his domain, till the place was as comfortable, convenient, and quaint a gentleman's residence as need be, at a cost of probably less than 50*l.* hard cash, and any day he chose to walk out he could have turned it into 1000*l.* or 1200*l.*, or more. The common had many sweet nibbles about it for a cow or two, and this, little by little, Will managed, in his peculiar way, to get to himself, by making it inconvenient and objectionable to other cows and donkeys. It was more or less covered with gorse, and there was good store of rabbits in this gorse, and oftentimes a covey of birds, and a pheasant or two, with a stray hare now and then ; and in the middle of it was a boggy pond of an acre or so, where in the winter many a duck and snipe came to grief ; adjoining it was about 200 acres of rough, poor land, belonging to a neighbouring farmer, who had incurred obligations which he couldn't repudiate from Will, and over this nice little addition to his manor Will held sovereign sway, and got more game off than any one would credit at next to no cost at all. Will's larder was therefore by no means expensively supplied ; there was generally a pig in the tub, fattened at someone else's expense ; the same with his poultry ; and what friends he made among farmers and their wives by getting a sitting of eggs of choice sorts out of

various friends ; and how all this worked in to his own popularity and profit, need not be told.

He was a clean and fair shot, never smashed his game to bits, and never went for sensation shots ; but a pheasant anywhere within thirty-five yards, with Will squinting down that rare old Manton of his, was a little bit out of luck, for certain. Will, therefore, was constantly in request, on the big days as well as the off chances. Keepers liked him, and consulted him as though he were the highest court of appeal. As Mr. Gaiters, Lord Snapshot's head keeper, said, when pleading an invite for Will, "What I like, my lud, about Mr. Whistle's shootin' is, it's reliable—that's what it is ; and, you know, we must have a reliable gun at Collop's corner, or the Markiss's people'll see more of our birds than we want." Any of Gaiter's "clients," as he called them, would have stood a couple of sovs or more for that corner, and Will stood nothing. But Gaiters got a pup of the Markiss's breed of retrievers, which he'd been trying for a long time in vain ; and the Markiss's head man, Mr. Toplofty, was very successful in his bets at the next Row-down coursing meeting, and picked up three fives over the last course, when Will's dog only got the second money. I doubt if there was a much better judge of a greyhound in England than Will, and even Lord Snapshot would ask him for his pick for the Waterloo cup. Though he now played cricket but little, he was the secretary and backbone of that capital club, "The Acrobats." Now and then he was put up just to break the bowling, if there was a particular bowler to break down. His blocking was

something hideous, marvellous and crushing. Time after time the ball dropped from the bat within a yard or two, supine and useless. Pitch it short or long, straight or crooked, dribble or shoot, it was all the same. He never made runs. He'd be in an hour for half a dozen or so ; but he was like a pig in a gate—horribly in the way—and he rarely went out till he had killed the bowling. How Mr. Grim Twister, the professional county bowler, hated him ! If there was a man on earth whose leg he would have liked to break, it was Will. He had bowled at his legs dozens of times, but it was no use—not a bit.

Will had no relations living. He had had a brother formerly, but he was dead. A staid middle-aged party kept his house, and her husband was Will's man of all work.

" Any letters, Mrs. Mugsby ? " asks Will, coming in, after depositing his hat and stick in their usual places most methodically, and subsiding carefully into a mighty easy chair—made of a few spokes of deal and a bit of carpet, very nearly the maximum of the luxury at the minimum of expense—while Mugsby leads the pony to the stable. " Hem, let's see ; Mrs. White wants a settin' of those Rouen ducks' eggs does she ? Well—by the way, who sent that cheese, Mrs. Mugsby ? "

" Mrs. White, sir, with her respectful compliments," replies the good lady.

" Oh, very well then, we'll get her those eggs. Yes. ' Dear Will '—eh, what ? Fiver be blowed ! T'other way up, my dear lad. The draw is on the other boot, as you'll find anon. Let's see. ' Would

Mr. Whistle like to walk over the home coverts with Mr. Toplofty and a friend on Tuesday, as the Marquis won't shoot 'em no more this season, and I knows of three or four cock in Little-shoots, and there's plenty birds left—T. Toplofty.' Yes, Mr. Whistle would like—accepted. Tuesday at ten ;" and he dropped the engagement into a japanned weekly remembrancer on the mantelpiece. "We're gettin' on there, I think ; and if I can only once get hold of the Marquis, with Rakeshaw's help, I'll—there'd be some rare pickings there !" and his countenance beamed with a cunning smile at some anticipated profits in the future. "Hem ! what's this ? Raisins' bill, eh ! Ah, well ! the bacon 'll balance that, and leave a little to spare too. Farmer Jones, eh ! 'Respectful compliments, and have sent a T.U.R.C.,—oh ! turkey,—'ole of the Crismas ones'—and good ones they were—' and begs Master Whistle's acceptance of same, and to thank him likewise for that sow, as she's done right down well,' &c., &c., &c. Let's look at the turkey, Mrs. Mugsby. Ah ! a deal too big for us ; put him in the hamper along with the rabbits, and let Mugsby take them over to the station as soon as he's had his tea. You can put in those pheasants too I brought home last night from The Dene. There's a couple of cocks, too, I got off the common. I've half a mind to eat them myself. But no—stop a bit ! Send 'em to Lawyer Rakeshaw with my respectful compliments. It's the only game he cares about. He did me a good turn, and will furnish me with many a 'long bill' in return—he, he !—and the altar of friendship should

always be properly cemented with interest and —ah—pickings. And, Mrs. Mugsby, tell Mugsby to see about those empties, and to ask the station master to be so kind as not let my hampers lie about the platforms for everyone to read the addresses. You understand ; and here, take him a couple of rabbits. He's a very good fellow, and knows how to hold his tongue—an excellent thing in station masters, who are mostly gossips. And now, Mrs. Mugsby, bring me my slippers and the hot water, nutmeg, and sherry, and the *Calendar*. See to-day's Tuesday. Post that run and poor Dick Diminy's memoir to *The Ager*, or it won't be in time this week." Our friend did a little in the sporting literary way, and turned over an honest pound or two in that fashion. "Oh, that's the *Calendar* ; yes, thanks. And now what weight *did* Cheesemonger carry in that Biennial ? I'm sure they were all wrong last night about that, though I said Sir George was right ; and there's a sov. or two to be picked up there by an industrious young man. So Tomlinson tried to sell me over that puppy stake, did he ? and claims a fiver of me, does he ? He's a d—— scamp, that chap. He's selling his straw, which is contrary to his lease ; and if my friend Rakeshaw gets to hear of that, *as he may*, it will be bad for *him*, I fancy. I said so—eight stone seven, and won easy. That's worth noting ; that's as good as a tenner any day. We'll tick that" (makes a note in a neat little book). "Lord Snap wants the bitch to try his puppy with. Well, he shall have her. He ! He !—She's a little off now, and couldn't hold P'rake

in the run up yesterday ; so I shall know more of the trial than he will ; and if he enters at Row-down *that* should be worth something also. We'll tick that too. I like the looks of that colt of Robby's. I wonder if he'll take a couple of score for him ? If he will, there's a pot to be made out of him. He don't know who the horse was, but I do ; and if I get him, what a fluke it 'll be ! We'll tick that likewise with two crosses. Knowledge *is* power, and, as my friend the Claimant said, 'some has brains and some has money ;' and, after all, it's more system than brains. There's plenty with brains *in a way*, but they don't know how to use 'em. Some people waste 'em in reading politics, philosophy, poetry, and such stuff. Why, there's only one line in all Shakespeare I ever thought worth remembering—

The world's mine oyster.

My idea exactly—exact—" and, so musing, he fell asleep.

AN ANGLER'S CHRISTMAS YARN.

"Thou art a cobbler, art thou."

"Truly, sir; all that I live by is with the awl."

Julius Cæsar.

THE following tale comes out of my Uncle Ben's tackle box, which is a receptacle for all sorts of odds and ends, and has been pitchforked into my reminiscences somehow. My Uncle Ben *loquitur*. Be pleased to remember that, as the story is written in the first person.

It is a very jolly thing, no doubt, to sit as we are now, over the port wine and walnuts, after a good dinner of prize beef, leviathan turkey, prodigious plum pudding, and the most fragrant of mince pies ; while the youngsters crowd in between our legs, each with a plate full of apples and oranges, nuts, raisins, or figs, and no fear of Dr. Gregory in the distance, but with joyous anticipations of the dance, the forfeits, and the romps under the mistletoe to come. But, let me tell you, there are a great many people in this big town who have no snug fireside to sit by, no families or friends to help 'em, and no jolly dinner, and no jollier dessert, and jolliest evening to while away their Christmas-day. I am an oldish man now, and I have got wife, children, and friends about me ; but I remember the time when I was only a forlorn appren-

tice serving out my time, when things were very much otherwise. I passed a Christmas or two in those days that were dismal enough in all conscience. What to me were all the crowd hurrying to and from church, laughing, joking, and passing the compliments of the season to one another? They were going to pleasant family circles and lively dinners, and dances in the evening. I hadn't any family circle, I knew no one to ask me to dinner; and as for dancing in the evening! I wasn't licensed for it. However, to my tale.

Not far from my lodging was a little by-street called "Dumbledown Row;" it led from nowhere to nowhere, and the houses on one side had a sort of lower projecting sheltered storey, like the old Rows at Chester, and you went up steps and walked on the top of the lower storey, which was parted out into here a little shop, or a stall, or a kitchen, or what not, and in the smallest of one of these tenements lived a cobbler, one Jeremiah Cheese. Cobblers, from long contemplation and solitary confinement, are too often rather morose in temper; but this was not the case with Jerry Cheese. He was the merriest little blade imaginable, always singing. Bless you, he had a sweet tenor voice, that rang up the quiet deserted row at times like the note of a nightingale through a copse. *That* first attracted me to Jerry. He tap, tap, tapped out the time to his music in a striking and quite a melodious way. The "Woodpecker," being a highly appropriate song, of course was one of Jerry's prime favourites, and the "Woodpecker" tapped and Jerry tapped in wonderful concert, and, as Jerry said, the music helped out the work and made it go easy.

Many a half-hour have I leant over Jerry's little low half-door, smoking my pipe and holding disjointed chat with him, until at last I was so far promoted as to be asked inside—a favour very rarely conceded to anyone, let me tell you—and an old block in a corner was from that time out regarded as my natural kennel. If I came to the door, and Jerry was negotiating notes with the woodpecker, he would simply nod and continue, as I slipped into my usual corner, “But the 'ood (tap) pecker tappin' of (tap) the 'ollow (tap) beech tree- (tap) e-e, The 'ood (tap) pecker tappin' of (tap) the 'ollow (tap) beech tree (tap, tap). There ! soled and 'eeled as good as new ! Two-and-six, Missis Burley. It used to be two-and-three, but hide's dear. Dear me, yes ! everything's dear ! Can't think what the world's a-comin' to ! 'Ave you 'eard as they talk o' shuttin' up that there bit o' water at 'Ack Bridge ?” (turning to me). To this I reply in the negative.

“ Ah, but *I* 'ave ! They're a-railin' off a good bit of it, I'm told. It's a darnation shame ! That's the way them bloated haristocrats treats us poor people ! What's the use of talkin' of the dignity o' labour if it ain't got no adwantages ? ‘Wot's a gentleman without his recreation ?’ says some'un in the sportin' prints ; but I wants to know wot's a poor man without his'n ? That's the question as 'll have to be answered some day. Let 'em take care that 'ere recreation ain't Tails I win, and 'Eads you lose,” continues Jerry gloomily. “ Why, there won't be a bit o' water within fifty mile o' London where a poor man 'll be able to go for a bit o' fly-fishin' for a trout, soon ; and I remember, when I was a boy, miles on it, take it altogether, within

fifteen or twenty mile o' London. There was that 'ere nice piece at Leatherhead"—brightening up—"why, I've 'ad four brace o' rattlers out o' that water in one day, not one on 'em under a pound and a quarter, and the biggest 'un 'ard on three pound. But then that was a day!" and Jerry would nod his head as he filled his pipe for a piscatorial jaw, as if to express that such a day as that was worthy of the largest red letter known to bill posters. "And then," continuing, "there was three bits on the Wandle, all of 'em good for a brace o' fish to a hindustrous cove—perhaps more if you stopped late enuff. And then there was a nice bit on the Cray afore it was spilt by paper mills—rat them mills! If I was president o' this yere republic, I'd stop all them paper mills right off—leastways, I'd make hevery one on 'em cart his own rubbish into the next parish. Wot right 'ave any one to defile the pure waters as God gave for all on us alike? Tell me that; and why can't I walk out o' my stall down to Thames bank off the quay, and catch roach and dace for my supper, as they used to did? Tell me that. It's all along of them plutocrats. Wot with one crat and another crat, we're crushed to the hearth, that's what we air. Ah! and them was trout too, mind you, in the Cray," said Jerry, harking back—"such beauties! I've seen 'em up to 4lb. and 5lb. there. Then there was a bit on the Darent; but that was too far, and not easy to get to, and there warn't much on it. There was one or two bits on the Colne—one werry nice bit nigh Uxbridge. I'd a friend, as was carrier there, as often gev me a lift down, and I walked back arter fishin', and there was lots more to pick and choose

from. I could 'a fly-fished for trout pretty nigh every day for a fortnight, and never 'a fished the same water twice, then, and no 'by your leave and with your leave' at all about it. Now the rich hes took 'em all in, more shame for 'em ! When this yere's a republic agin, we'll have 'em all open agin, and more too. Rights! what! D'ye mean to tell me as I arn't got no rights in a water as I've fished man an' boy, at my good will and pleasure, for 'ard on fifty year—over forty-five leastways—and my father afore me ? Wot is a right if that aint ? I don't know nothin' about lor, and don't wan't to. Lor, so far as I kin see, is a werry good thing for a rich man, an' a werry bad thing for a poor 'un. My uncle went to lor, an' arterwards naterally to the workus. That's wot he did ! An' if I 'ad my will, I'd just make all them old Lord Chancerys, Common Pleases, Divorce, and Errors, an' all that, into suthin' useful ; for it's a sin an' a shame to see so much beeyoutiful 'oss 'air wasted for nothin' on them wigs. Lord a mussey ! wot a thing it would be to pull out a two-pound roach with the Lord Chancery's pigtail ! It 'd be more use then than ever it was afore. Oh, yes ; I'm a rip-uplican, I know. An' what if I be ? There's better 'n me as is ; leastways, I'd rip up that 'ere woolsack and make some use on it, if it was only pillers for the orsepital, if I 'ad my ways, an' one or two other abuses besides—or my name ain't Cheese, which it air, young man. But, now, look you 'ere ; what are you going to do on Crismis Day ?"

Such was Jerry Cheese, the most ferocious republican in words and principles, but, in reality, the softest-hearted, the kindliest, lowliest, most loving and love-

able disciple of dear old father Izaak, I ever knew. Yes ; spite of Jerry's sallow face and thin black hair—in spite of his slightly rounded back, almost deformed—in spite of his bandy legs and his odour of leather—in spite of his strong politics, and of all his drawbacks, to really know Jerry Cheese intimately was to love him. But then it was not easy to know Jerry intimately. He took a fancy to me, I don't know why, and we became fast friends. Jerry, as I have shown, was a devoted fisherman ; when I first knew him, I knew nothing of the art. He, however, inoculated me, and taught me. I became his disciple, and grew fonder and fonder of the sport under his teaching. Jerry knew every bit of water that could be fished by people in his circumstances for twenty miles round London ; he knew when it was, or ought to be, in good fishing order, and very often contrived to drop upon it in the nick of time. And really it was quite astonishing what treasures of experience he had stowed away. There were bits of streams—mere fords or road crossings, with a short space above and below, perhaps—out-of-the-way ponds, and odds and ends of fishing in places almost unknown to Londoners then, and yet often very close to the metropolis, to which Jerry contrived somehow now and then to get admission ; and there were many others out of which Jerry knew how to extract fish which seldom yielded much to other anglers. Many a time and oft did Jerry and I sally out on a Saturday evening, to walk the night through, and get to some favourite fishing spot by early morning, to fish all day, and return next evening laden with the finny spoils.

Thus, with such associations, I need not repeat that Jerry and I became fast friends ; and it was just about a week before Christmas, some years ago, that Jerry put the question to me which I have already repeated, “ Wot be you a-goin’ to do on Crismis Day ? ”

I knew, of course, what Jerry meant to do. There was no day in the year, when he had leisure, that he did not go a-fishing. “ Church ? ” well, yes, Jerry’s church was rather a “ Broad Church,” perhaps including the broad fields with the broad firmament above them ; and there, if he did not actually prostrate himself and pray, like Jacob, yet did he thank God in his heart for his simple pleasures, and the pleasant earth, sky, and water ; and in this much Jerry was his own parson and his own clerk. The roar of the weir was his organ, and the birds his choristers. He was a communist in such things in reality. Jerry, on this occasion, having no family ties, no cares as to the turkey or mince pies upon his shoulders, was resolved to go away up the Thames, where he knew of a certain jack and perch hole, with a roach swim above it, which he thought “ likely ; ” and I, having but few ties either then, agreed to join him.

Jerry had a friend who was an engine driver (he had several friends more or less in the locomotive way, and made use of them), so that we got a lift on his engine in front of a goods train, early in the morning, down to a remote siding some thirty miles out of town, with a promise of a lift back next evening. Half a mile brought us to Slopperton lock ; and here Jerry had an old chum in the lock keeper, who, having been apprised of our coming by Jerry, left the shed open for us, and

the old boat unlocked, with some live baits in a can hung over the side. We crept into the shed, among old sails, nets, &c., and made ourselves as snug as circumstances would admit of till morning broke ; and then, unchaining the boat, dropped away down the river for a mile or so to Potter's Ait, a long, irregular eyot or ait of half a mile or so in length, covered with tall withies and fringed with pollards. Towards the lower end, in a sort of sheltered niche, was our swim, and, pushing the bow of the boat in amongst the bushes, and fixing her firmly there, we commenced our operations, first taking a thimbleful of something short to keep the raw morning air from chilling our stomachs. How I remember it all ! Far down bobbed a big bung, with a lively dace 3ft. below it, waiting for a jack to beat up his quarters ; at a shorter distance a more moderate cork, with a smart minnow and a little gudgeon at a like distance below, invited the predatory perch, while Jerry and self, nearer at hand, baited the swim and fished for roach. But, somehow, we did not do much ; half a dozen moderate roach, and one small jack of three-quarters of a pound or so, and never a perch at all, formed our take. We struggled on against luck, but our efforts were futile ; the fish were sulky. The day grew more and more cloudy, and the wind rose up. At length we got tired, stepped out of the boat on to the ait, and left the rods to fish for themselves.

About twenty yards inland was a small, dilapidated hut, used by the rod cutters when engaged on the ait for various purposes. Jerry surveyed it with a critical eye. "I think we'll have to take refuge here

from the looks o' the weather. It'll snow before long, I'm thinking. You go and get some wood from them old pollards, while I tidies up here a bit ; " and Jerry cleared out the hut, while I brought some dead wood, of which there was an abundance lying about. Two or three large flat stones, used for the same purpose before, were set up as a fireplace just outside the door, and, seated just inside it, were we, on two huge bunches of dry shavings of the withies, which lay in heaps about the hut. The fire was soon blazing away, restoring warmth and life to our numbed fingers, while our stock of provisions—a stout knuckle of ham, a good whang of cheese, and a couple of thick slices of cold plum pudding, rapidly toasting into hot on two sticks before the fire—formed our humble repast. With this we had provided a bottle of gin, and we soon had some boiling water; for Jerry, who knew by instinct where everything was, or ought to be, had routed out an old tin pot, and polished it into something like cleanliness. There were thousands of folks at that hour a great deal worse off than we were. The wind came moaning and whooshing down among the withies, the snow began to drive and eddy rapidly round; but what cared we? We were out of the blast, well sheltered, with a good fire in front, plenty of fuel handy, hot grog enough for all the afternoon, and plenty of backey—what more could we desire? Several pipes were smoked, several hot grogs disposed of; we were enjoying the very height of comfort, and conversation went meandering on between intermittent puffs and alternate swigs, and at last old Jerry settled down, as he sometimes did,

from disjointed chat into connected narrative, in this wise :

"Bill, the engine-driver, told me as we came along that he lost a big jack of eight or nine pounds in that very swim yonder, and it's unaccountable why we couldn't get a run out of him. He might ha' made us happy on Crismis day—it's on'y once a year ; but jacks is rum fish ; sometimes they will, and then they won't, and then all of a sudden they will again, too, like winking. One while you'd think they was all starving, and another while that they was all mad on for feeding. They gets small too. It's long sin' I ketched any jacks of a size ; but when I was at Spratton there *was* jacks there. Spratton—ah ! I always thinks o' Spratton sometime on Crismis Day. Ah ! well I may too ;" and he gave a kind of shudder, and thought silently for a minute. "I've told you some things, but never about Spratton," he continued presently. "It's a dullish day, and fit for a dullish story ; the wind howls and the snow flies thick, and—and I don't mind, just to pass the time, if I do tell you." He paused again, took a pull at the grog and a puff at his pipe, and then began.

Many years ago, when I was quite a young man, I was a journeyman down at the little village of Spratton, in Norfolk. Spratton lies handy to a small mere—leastways it was a mere then, but it has since been drained, and is now as fine corn land as any in the county ; but at that time Spratton Mere was a very pretty little mere, perhaps a hundred or more acres in extent. It was a favourite place for anglers in them days, and many a one came down from Norwich and

Yarmouth, and stopped at the Rose and Crown at Spratton for the angling, and many a big basket of roach, bream, perch, and pike have I had out of it. We used to reckon 'em by the stone. The pike at one time was very fine in it, till a knot of idle fellows about the place took up with netting and trimmering and all sorts of infunnel devices, till at last, where we used to catch 'em with the rod up to 15lb. and 20lb. sometimes, it came to be that a 5-pounder was a rarity. Many a time did we try to get these fellows to leave off their mischievous work, telling them how they were injuring the place as well as the fishing by keeping anglers and customers away from it, and how many a five shillings was lost to the fishermen, and many a pound to the Rose and Crown ; but they wouldn't be persuaded, for they sent their fish up to Norwich and Yarmouth, and they fetched enough to keep 'em loafing about idle and drunk half their time at the pot-houses. So nothing could stop 'em, for the lord of the manor, who might if he'd liked, was away in furrin parts, and cared nothing about it.

Well, among these chaps was young Sam Cousins, a fellow-journeyman of my own at one time. Sam was a good and quick workman, and could easily have earned more wages at his work than he got in this loafing, idle way ; but Sam couldn't abear work, and 'ated confinement of any sort, even for a 'our, and by indulging in these courses he got worse and worse, till he gave up his trade altogether at last. This game went on till fish got scarce, and in course money got scarce too with the poachers, and beer likewise,

and then they took to grumbling and growling at the anglers, and swore that they destroyed their livin'—*their* livin'! Pretty *livin'* it was, I take it, the skulkin' vagabones! Well, it got towards winter, a good many years agone, and things was going 'ard with the poachers, and it was likely to be a blue look-out for Crismis with them; and at length it came to the day afore Crismis Day. I'd been down to the mere in the afternoon, trying for a pike or two as I wanted to give my master for a present, to help his Crismis cheer a bit, and by great good luck I'd got two goodish ones, about 6lb. and 4lb. each. I was tackling up to go home, when who should come along but Sam Cousins, with a big basket and trimmers, a-goin' to his boat he was at the time. He sees my two fish, and good 'uns they was for that time o' day. "Wot!" he says, "so there you be, Jerry Cheese, at it agin, a spilin' our livin' as lives by fishin'; and you anglers never catches nothin'—oh, no!—and it's all along o' we that the fish gets few." He had the chat, ye see, at his fingers' ends, like the best or worst o' 'em.

"Livin'!" says I; "a pretty livin' it is; and as for fishin', why don't ye call a spade a spade, and say poachin'? That's what all that trimmerin' is, and I wish the lord of the manor, Mr. S., was at home; he'd soon stop it, and not see the mere ruined, and the town too for that matter, as it is bein'."

"Lord of the manor be —," says he; "wot's he got to do with we?"

"Why, everything to do with you," says I. "The fishing belongs to him, and nobody else; and if he was

at home he'd soon have all those trimmers and nets of yourn off the water."

"Would he, by —— ! If he interfered with we, we'd just stick him and his bailiff in the middle o' the mere, where I hope I may be stuck 'ard and fast if I don't 'ave a rare mess o' fish by to-morrow mornin'." Poor feller ! He didn't know wot he was a sayin', nor how evil words comes back on one (continued Old Jerry, solemnly). "Here, I've got in this basket fifty big trimmers, and, if they 'aint in demand almost all over the mere by daylight, may I never come ashore alive."

Says I, "Sam, you mout do better nor go a-poachin' on Crismis eve. It 'aint right nor Christen-like ; poachin's bad enuff at any time, and wuss then."

"Crismis Eve be —— !" "Hush Sam," says I, "Look 'ere, come along o' me, for old friendship's sake. Let that job be. It's like to be a 'ard night, if I'm any judge o' weather, and you'll be better at 'ome with me. I've got ten shillin' o' my own, and if you'll come, blarm me if you shan't have half on it, so as not to have a dull Crismis to-morrow."

This softened him a bit, and he says, slow-like, "Jerry," says he, "you're a good feller, and I've got to be a reg'lar rip, but it's all no use now, and while I ken work I won't be beholden to no one for *my* Crismis dinner and swig. All right, old feller, the weather's nout to speak on—we'll have a fall o' snow mayhap, and then it'll be warmer, and there'll be rare fishing, and I'll 'ave sich a take as h'ant been had for many a day. All the tothers is down at the Cock and Bottle—the milksops won't turn out; too cold for'em

for a night on the mere—but I'll show' em I'm made o' different stuff; so good night, old boy."

Well, seein' as he was determined, I said no more, but collared my fish and went 'ome. We had a jolly evenin', for the old master wasn't a bad sort, and we had forfeits and snap-dragon, and dancin' and hunt-the-slipper; and his da'ters, as were 'ansom gals—rael 'ansome they was; like a pair o' high-heel red morocco slippers with silk tassels and silver buckles—was werry pleasant. I never see no gals half as pleasant since. One on 'em—but there! she never could abear the smell o' leather, and married a baker. (Here Jerry took another pull at the liquid; the topic affected him.) But to continny. The neighbours come in strongish too. "Wot a cold night it is!" says one; "Bitter cold!" says another, as they was puttin' on their things to go. "I don't think I ever minds such a frost as this on Crismis eve for the last ten years. Why, there'll be three or four inches o' ice on the mere t' morrer, and skatin' in two days if it lasts." Then all of a suddin I thought o' Sam, and a chillier chill came over me than ever the frost could give me. It was a bright moonlight night, and a north-easter that nipped like pinchers, sharp and hard as steel. Good Heaven! what'll become of the poor feller if he gets catched in the mere to-night? He'll be froze up, surely; but then he must 'a found it comin' on, and would be sartin to come back. So I walked on, comforting myself with this notion.

I was just going to turn in, when the thought struck me I'd run round to his lodgings, and see if he *was* back. I did so, and the old woman as kept

'em poked her head out of the window, and to my question grunted out a surly "No ; he was down at the Cock and Bottle with his mates belike." But that he wasn't, I knew, because that was closed an hour or more. What should I do ? I could not go to bed, so at last I wrapped my thick coat round me, and set off down to mere again. It was not above twenty minutes' walk, and I soon stood on the bank where I had left Sam. His boat, I saw, was still away ; but there was a slight fog on the mere, so that I could not see far over it. I shouted again and again, and waited for a reply ; but the crackling of the ice that was now forming thickly on the mere, and the noise made by the waterfowl alarmed at my voice, was the only sounds I heard. I went back, and called at the house of one of Sam's closest companions. He was half asleep and half drunk, but I made him understand my fears at length. "Oh, Sam, is it ?" he replied at last. "Oh, he's all right, I know ; for he told me that he was goin' to set his trimmers, and then go across the mere and up to the Chequers at Basham, to arrange a bit o' business with the lads there, and then to come back and look for the trimmers in the morning ; so he's safe enuff."

This calmed me a bit, and I went home to bed ; but I had a baddish night, with dreadful dreams, and once or twice I woke up in a fright, fancying that I had heard poor Sam's voice calling to me in a faint low whisper across the mere ! Once I even thought I heard it while I was awake, and the very idea put me into a complete cold perspiration. Ugh ! I shiver even now at the recollections. With morning

light I could endure it no longer, and I dressed, took a crust of bread, and again hurried down to the mere. There was still a mist, and I could see nothing. The ice had thickened to an inch and a half. I was thinking of walking round the mere to Basham to make inquiries, when the sun came up. The mist lifted and flew away in a minute, and there, in the very middle of the mere, was a boat motionless and frozen in, but, as far as I could see, there was no one on board her. I shouted and shouted till I was hoarse and my voice cracked, but there was no motion in the boat, and no answer. Just then the man whom I had gone to, Phil Rogers, came down. "Wot's the matter, mate? What's the hollerin' about?" I pointed to the motionless boat. He looked too, and his eyes gradually grew rounder and rounder as he grew paler and paler. "Sam!" he muttered in a low bewildered sort of voice; "then it was him as I 'eard call about two o'clock. I couldn't sleep for it, and that's wot brought me down so early." "What, did you hear it too?" I asked. "Did I? aye did I! It was a sort o' low faint whisper, and called me by my name three times. The last time I'll swear I was broad awake, and I heard it as plain as I hear the wind now rustling through them reeds, and it was a low, rustling call, just like that." "This is awful strange," said I, "for I heard it too. But what's to be done?" "Done?" "Ah, done!" But neither of us had an answer ready. Mayhap, we said, he went to Basham 'arter all, and the boat's got loose and drifted out. There was hope in this, but not for long.

Somewhat ill news flies fast, and people get hold of it wonderfully quick. My own uneasiness about Sam, and something that Phil had said, soon brought people about ; and one young fellow, who had been at the Chequers at Basham overnight, declared that Sam had never been there. This left us little hope ; but what was to be done ? The ice wouldn't bear at all fifty yards out, and how were we to get to that boat ? "There's nothing for it, boys, but to break a way through to the boat," says I. "Get some stout poles and axes four or five of you, and come along in this boat with me. It will be a long job ; but we must do it for poor Sam. 'Hap he's not in it, as we see nothin' of him ; if so, no harm's done.'" No sooner said than half a dozen stout chaps, armed with hatchets and heavy poles, jumped into the boat, and began breaking a way through the ice and shoving the boat along. It was slowish work at first ; but as soon as we got used to it, and understood the work, we made quicker way, and yard after yard was broken in, and we got out further and further towards the boat, until a good deal more than half the distance was reached.

By this time there was a great crowd on the shore, and other boats kept bringing us refreshments ; indeed, all the village had turned out. With that we fell to with a will, and made rapid way, so that we were soon within fifty yards of the boat. We all stood up, and craned over to see if we could see anything inside it ; but it was too far off yet. Splash, dash ! how the good axes and stout poles smote the ice and dashed it into huge fragments, and how the perspiration poured off us and smoked in the frosty

air ! On we pushed. Hurrah, another ten yards ! That does it, my hearts ! and then there was a dead silence. "Poor feller, poor feller !" Yes, there in the bottom of the boat lay a long, shapeless mass, hidden by a light tarpaulin, which was frosted over with rime, and a slight fall of snow which the sun had scarcely touched, out in the middle of the mere. I jumped into the boat and lifted the shroud, for a shroud it was in truth. There lay poor Sam, stiff, frozen, and dead. He had set his trimmers, and laid himself down in the bottom of the boat under the tarpaulin, and no doubt had fallen asleep. The frost king had come down and swept his soul away. One of the last boats that came out to us brought the doctor off, who said he must have been dead for hours.

"But seems to me as the snow is over."

The afternoon had now cleared away, and the evening was falling ; so, gathering up our impedimenta, we speedily made our way to the lock. After a cup of tea, a yarn, and a pipe with the lock-keeper, we betook ourselves to the railway siding, where our friend's engine was waiting for us ; and so, with a rush and a roar through the dark night, away on the wings of the wind to the great Babylon once more.

AN ANGLER'S REMINISCENCES.

"A deed without a name."

SQUARING THE KEEPER.

TALKING of railway experiences in the angling line, here is another of a different description. How I enjoyed that day, to be sure! Some old sportsmen dearly love a little bit of poaching; for my part, it must be a very little bit to suit me. I never feel comfortable under it. In shooting, for example, I have seen some fellows who would rather pot a brace of birds off a neighbour's land than a dozen brace from their own, the stolen sweets are so particularly relishing. I never had any such feeling. If I ever was induced to break bounds, I always felt ashamed of myself from the first. My heart never was in the work, and if I got a shot I was so disturbed by my sense that I had no right to it, that the odds were two to one against the gun, though on other occasions it would be two to one on it; and if a keeper did appear, I would always rather have sneaked off by the shortest cut to my own territory than brazen it out by a bribe of 5s. I don't think, if left to my decision, I would ever willingly—never deliberately—have poached; but, on the occasion I am about to deal with

I did it without intent, and cheeked it out afterwards in such a way that I often doubt in my own mind whether it could have been I, and if so what possessed me.

We had a line from the Three Bridges Station on the Brighton line to Horsham under consideration ; and I was engaged in surveying and levelling it. The line has long since been constructed. Our party, consisting of three, put up at the old-fashioned half-way house at Crawley—a queer little village, with a very remarkable old elm tree in it, the root and bole of which are hollowed out and form a small apartment. Crawley was a wonderful place in the old coaching days. The inn was a house of great grandeur and pretension ; even then there were some attenuated remnants of old plate that gave one the idea of a lady-like old spinster very much reduced in circumstances. Here, formerly, dozens of coaches stopped daily, and it was rarely that they had not out from thirty to forty pair of post horses. Now one coach called during the summer at the end of the village, and a pair of post horses three times a week was good work ; a sad falling off ! Still the worthies of the village assembled nightly in the common room (greatly shorn of its glories) to have their smoke and talk, and, being a gregarious animal, I preferred to join them rather than to smoke alone. One evening I was listening to the usual Babel of conversation going on round me about pigs, beasts, and whuts, when I heard the word “trout” close at hand. I immediately pricked up my ears ; two men sitting by me were talking :

"Ah, I've had many a voine un out an it, surelye."

"Out of where?" said I, breaking in upon the talk without scruple.

"Whoy, out o' the stream down agin th' steation."

"Stream! why, you don't mean that dead ditch water that runs under the road just above the public?"

"Ah! but I du tho! There be some voine trout in't, onlikely as't looks."

"The deuce there are!—and—and—may anyone go and fish it?"

"Ay, surelye. Whoy not?"

"Then dash my wigs if I don't go and have a turn at it to-morrow!" and, as my tackle needed looking up, I retired shortly. My stock was not extensive, for, not expecting any fishing, I had come down without any necessaries; but it so happened that, being at Horsham one day, and seeing in a small stream that flowed—or, as a Yankee would say, "flew"—through it in those days, some uncommonly fine roach, I went to the only shop in the town (a barber's I think it was) where any approach to fishing tackle could be purchased, and bought the only rod I could get, a small, trumpery, three-joint, walking-stick rod, a dozen or so of strands of Indian grass—gut he did not possess—a yard or so of silk line, and a few hooks; no reel, no running line, no anything else. With this I was perforce content. The fishing at Horsham did not result in much, and the place I was going to fish on the next day was pretty much as I have described it—a dead, deep, ditchy-looking bit of water, apparently with very little stream, which ran under the

road and past the end of the garden appertaining to a public-house on the other side of the road. I rigged up a line of a yard and a half or so of silk, and to it fastened a strand of Indian grass some two feet long, and on this tied a No. 6 or 7 hook. I had no shot, because, the stream being almost still, the worm would suffice to carry it to the bottom. I forgot to say that worm fishing was my intent ; for, even had I had fly tackle, the stream was so grown over and inclosed in a thicket that it was not possible to use it.

The next morning I sallied out directly after breakfast, and, having to get some bait, I stopped on the road side just behind a gipsy's cart, where there was a mound of old road scrapings and cuttings, and, to the astonishment of sundry olive-coloured juveniles, I commenced turning the stuff up with a pointed stick, and soon got together a good stock of worms. Having put in a bit of moss out of the hedge to scour them, I again made tracks for the water, and soon reached it. There was a stile opposite the public house, and I stepped over it. A footpath ran alongside of a dense sort of hedgerow thicket, which was some twenty or thirty yards or more deep, and in the centre of this the stream ran. Into this I at once plunged, and soon got to the banks of the stream. It was sore work scrambling along them, the tangle was so thick. It did not look as if it was often fished. The first twenty or thirty yards or so did not seem tempting. It was straight, even, and dead, and the water looked black and very ditch-like. Presently I came to a bend, which made a sort of pool. It had a profound appearance. There might have been a fish there, and if

there was he would likely enough be a big one ; so, rapidly jointing up my little poker of a rod—for it was not above 8ft. or 9ft. long—I unwound the line, stuck a worm on the hook, and dropped it into the water. It slowly settled down out of sight to the bottom. It was some four or five feet deep, and barely had reached it when “spang” the line went, cutting the water, out towards the opposite bank. I raised the point sharply as it ran straight out, and struck. I only got one tug, and that nearly pulled the rod out of my hand and smashed everything, and, with a boil which came up to the surface as if the rudder of a boat had been rapidly turned below, a huge fish made his escape. I collapsed. “Four or five pounds, if he was an ounce, by the boil he made !” I groaned. “When—when shall I ever have such another chance ? When shall I ever hook such another ?” It was a dreadful beginning. Of course the miserable grass had broken ; but I doubt if even gut would have held him without a little running line. Had I had but three or four yards of that, so as to have allowed him to reach the opposite side without breaking, no doubt I might have got on terms with him in time ; but it was no use crying over spilt milk. As an Irishman would say, there might be “as good fish in the stream as *hadn’t* come out of it,” and luck might be in store yet ; so I set to work to repair damages, and, as single-strand grass was not strong enough, I doubled it and twisted it, and so tied another hook on. It was clumsy work enough, but the water was dark and the stream shaded, and the trout apparently very unsophisticated, for I soon began picking them up, here one and

there one. They all ran from about $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. to 1 lb., and I got some three or four brace of them pretty quickly.

Presently I emerged from the thicket, and found that the stream ran under an arch in the railway embankment. Dropping the worm in, I let it glide off under the arch, and got a heavy lug, and, after a turn of pully-hauly, up bolted a fine trout into the open stream above the arch. He was a powerful fish, and I had all my work to play him with my fourteen feet of rod and line without letting him go down under the arch again; but I was up to my work, and by degrees I coaxed him away from it into a little gut, and as soon as he was exhausted I shelled him out with my left hand. As I was doing so a train rattled by, and a row of heads popped out to note my battle with the trout. He was a capital fish, very handsome, and weighed exactly two pounds. I then crossed the railway and plunged once more into the thicket, which was here denser and deeper than ever. It was rare tearing and scrambling work, but the stream here was livelier and shallower, and the fish more plentiful; and, having now filled my pockets, I had to hang fish on the twigs as I went along (having no basket), with a view to retrieving them as I came back; and at every place where I made my way into the stream I left two or three good trout hanging gilled on a branch. I fished on and on, and the afternoon began to grow apace, the stream to get thin and shallow, and the trout small; so I thought I would turn back and fish only a choice spot or two on my return, collecting my fish as I went. Sport had been capital, and on

my return journey, though I only caught another fish or two, I filled my pockets, my hat, and my handkerchief, until I left off fishing at last, having nowhere else to stow a single fish more ; and I made my way out into the footpath, having tackled up and tied up my rod. By this time I was almost exhausted, for I had had nothing to eat or drink all day ; and, crossing the stile, I made for the public-house opposite to recruit the inner man. As I did so, the host came to the door.

“ What ! bin a-fishin’, sir,” was his accost.

“ Yes,” I replied, “ yes, and had some very nice sport — eighteen brace and a half, and one two-pounder.”

“ Why, where *have* you been then ?”

“ Oh, up the ditch in the thicket yonder.”

“ What !!! ” in a tone of horror. “ Ditch ! Why that’s the head of the Mole ! Don’t you know that I’m the keeper to it ? And master’s so dreadful particular that he won’t give leave to no one, and there hain’t been a single rod in there this two year ” (I could well believe it) “ and, by jingo, here he comes ! Here, bring them fish in out of sight ” (I had been untying the handkerchief to show them) “ and give me that there rod. If he sees ‘em, there’ll be a horful row.”

In we bolted, and a stout, jolly gentleman, with a white hat, drove up in a sulky, and stopped to discourse the landlord. I peeped at him from behind the curtain of the parlour window, and, as he sat flicking at a stone in the road, I thought he had a very “ see-you-hanged-before-I-give-you-leave ” kind of a face. They talked for a few minutes, and then he

drove on, when the host returned to me. I need not say that my feelings were not the most cheerful in the interval.

"Well, you air as nice a cool sort of young gent as I've met with for some time ! To go an' poarch a stream right an' left like this, and then to go and walk slap into the keeper's 'ouse an' show'n the vish ! What is to be done about it, danged if I knows. Ye ought to be summoned, that you did ! " " Well," I replied, "all right ; but first of all let's drink something, and then we'll consider about it. If you've got to do anything professional, why we shan't either of us be the worse of it for a pipe and a glass of brandy-and-water. ' You can always take up a quarrel at any time ; but a limited portion of spirits and water you cannot,' " quoth I, quoting Dickens, "and, while you're mixing it, give me a biscuit." At this he shook his head ; but I could see that it was like the shake of a pointer's tail when he is not certain whether he has game before him or no. So I filled up the two big rummers with a stiff dose of mahogany myself, and chirruped invitingly through a fine churchwarden pipe, before filling it with the finest of birds-eye, with which my pouch was well stocked.

" Well, I be dashed if I knows what I ought to do ! 'tis clear to me as ye did'n knaw ye was doin' wrong." The pointer's tail was wagging, and unconsciously his hand stole to the big rummer, and a third of the mahogany vanished at a swig.

" Certainly not ; should I have come in here to show you the fish if I had ? "

" Naw, naw, that be trew ; 't bent likely"—and I

pushed the big pouch across to him, for I saw that his eyes lightened at the sight of the birdseye, for really good tobacco was by no means so general in the country then as it is now. "That be true," he continued, filling his churchwarden in an absent kind of way, as if the question was still one of uncertainty ; and he repeated, slowly, "That be ver-ry"—puff, puff—pause—" 'mazin' foine backer this—puff—Lor ! —puff, puff—it dooes one good, sich a bit o' backer as this." From that time not another word was said about the poaching, but we branched off into general sport. Mine host was a real enthusiastic sportsman at heart. He enjoyed every kind of sport, and, beyond all, loved a crack about it like the present. We went the whole round of hunting, shooting, coursing, fishing, with a touch of ratting and badger "droring," and we both enjoyed ourselves very thoroughly.

Three times were those big jorums of mahogany refilled, and twice three times the contents of the churchwardens came and went, and mine host and myself grew more and more hail fellows, and more pleased with our company. It evidently was an unusual treat for Boniface, and he looked on me as a sort of phenomenon. At length, however, it began to get late, and I rose to go. I paid my score, and left the remains of the prime birdseye for his future pleasure—a delicacy he much appreciated. His last words to me as I left the house were : "Now look here ; if anybody 'ed a seed you as tha went along that theer footpath—and there was lots went along it, 'cos I seed 'em " (this was true enough, and I had heard them, too, but they did not see me), "I'd

'a lost my place, vor sartin. Now, mind, you must promise me you woan't never goo there no more" (this I readily did, and duty was satisfied). "But, lookee here" (catching hold of my arm just as I left the door, and whispering in my ear), the next time as you cooms, goo up droo my garden, and out at the little gate at the back ; there ben't no footpath at all there, and the vishin's a sight better nor 'tis down thik way." I never did goo up droo the garden, because we left the place next day ; but, all I can say is, that, if the fishing was better there, it must have been remarkably good—perhaps about the best I ever encountered, for I was tired enough of my load before I got home ; and, if it is better now, and the present owner will only give me the straight tip, I'll be delighted to go there next week. This was "nearly thirty years ago ; indeed, it may be longer." The public-house has become an inn of some pretension, the station an important junction (and I should much doubt the existence of trout in the stream near the railway), the thicket, I know, has been cut down, and the stream thrown open to the daylight, but the railway has been so widened and altered that one cannot see it *en passant*. But, if the old proprietor survives still, I hope he'll accept my apologies for my unconscious wrong-doing more than a quarter of a century since.

A WEEK ON THE BRATTLE.

“Let fate do her worst, there are relics of joy,
Bright dreams of the past which she cannot destroy.”

MOORE.

THE anticipation, the fulfilment, and the remembrance of a good day's fishing upon a new river make together one of the greatest pleasures of an angler's life. There may be in life matters of more important interest. The momentous question as to whether the seraphic Seraphina will consent to become Mrs. Piscator, and the fulfilment, &c., only, on an average perhaps, happens once in a lifetime. It is true a man may be married twice or three times, or even many, like Henry VIII. and Bluebeard, or “Jasper Packlemerton of atrocious memory,” who, according to Mrs. Jarley, “courted and married fourteen wives, and destroyed them all by tickling the soles of their feet when they were sleeping in the consciousness of innocence and virtue,” and who, “on being brought to the scaffold and asked if he was sorry for what he had done, replied Yes, he was sorry for having let 'em off so easy, and hoped all Christian husbands would pardon the offence. Observe his fingers curved in the act of tickling, and his face represented with a wink as he appeared when committing his barbarous murders.” But even Jasper Packlemerton must have

admitted, when he was arranging his fourteenth tickling match, that there was a sameness about the ceremony which made it less interesting than his first one. And even when that avuncular old man of Tobago, who has lived upon gruel and sago for long years in order to pile up that big heap of gold, discontinues that diet, and, to re-make an old joke, becomes himself a *diet of worms*, and we find ourselves down for a large slice of his savings, like the witches in "Macbeth" "we should rejoice when good kings," or even good uncles, "bleed," particularly if they bleed freely and copiously. But the rejoicing dies away and wears out with realisation, whereas a day's fishing such as I have indicated never loses its interest, and is as fresh and enjoyable on the fourteenth or the fourteenth score or even hundredth time, as it was at first; and we rejoice quite as much over a good bit of fishing neatly done at fifty as we did at fifteen, and perhaps more, because we know all about it, and are able to appreciate the skill and the difficulty thoroughly. I feel conscious that there should be a quotation of some sort here to show that someone has had a somewhat similar feeling or idea on a like position formerly, but as I don't know where to look for it, I pass the opportunity over. So, to resume. How very pleasant it is to look on and see a real artist come over a fish that he wants badly. How neatly he puts fly after fly over the doomed rascal, crouching down on his hams as close as nature lets him, until, vanquished at last by the angler's seductions, trouty comes like a very woman and takes the lure. Trout are very like women, you know—please their eye and

you can turn them round your finger—"Ah, you think you can do it," do you, Mr. Tyro? and "it looks very easy," does it? "Well, you'll know better when you know more." I am sure that I can enjoy a good day's fishing almost as keenly as I could thirty years ago. Thank God, it is a pleasure that won't wear out. The picture of the gouty enthusiast in his easy chair bobbing for roach and dace in a tub is not so very much of an exaggeration. It is a quaint notion well worked out, but that is all; and I can quite understand how one might get no end of amusement by being wheeled in a Bath chair to the top of the Brighton Aquarium tanks, for example, and being allowed to bob for a porpoise, let us say: and if he knocked out the side of the tank in his run, and went down the fall into the aisle below, squattling among the rocks of pillars, seats, and people, it would be as much as you could do, I know, to prevent his breaking you; and if he got round a pile—I mean a pillar—or sulked behind a seat, he'd be bound to.

Yes, the joys of angling last longer and more continuously than any other. After a certain age hunting must become more or less of a reminiscence, and the once deadly tubes, that were so unerring at grouse, pheasant, or partridge at five-and-thirty yards or so, become wavering and uncertain, while the toil over and through heather, turnips, or beans becomes too much for the weakened limbs; but still, for years after this haply, Piscator can sit in his punt and count his roach and dace by the score, and manage a stout tussle with an obstinate barbel nearly as well as ever, and may even hobble along the bank of a trout stream

in fair weather, and cast the delicate feathers, with a slender rod and a still straight line, for the spotted trout or grayling, even though the mighty twenty feet of greenheart is beyond his strength. And when the weather is unkind, what treasures of memory rest in turning over the stores of old tackle and well-thumbed piscatory manuals, even though we have most of their precepts by heart. And so I am well assured that a man loses much pleasure, philosophy, and health by not being a fisherman, no matter whatever other sport he may be fond of.

Thus I pondered as I was trundling down to the borders of Wales, to fish the Brattle for the first time —one of those lovely streams where the trout are not dwarfed to the size of most of those which throng the mountain brooks of the principality, but where the scenery is a mixture of Welsh and English, half mountain, half meadow and copsewood. I had read all my papers ; criticised an article of my own in a popular magazine which had appeared that morning, and thought where I could have even improved it, if I had had to write it over again ; and, light failing, had declined on thought, and my cigar was out, when the train began to slacken, and presently came to a stop at a small roadside station. “Rington ! Rington ! Rington ! Change here for Basham and Boreham.” “At last.” “Hallo, old fellow, here you are. How are you, dear old boy,” said a cheery voice as my old schoolmate and friend, Charley Blatherskite, looked into the carriage in search of me. “William, get Mr. F.’s luggage. Is this all ? All right then ! come along ; the cart is at the gate, and Mrs. Wadlow will

be in a fit if we keep dinner waiting ; it's five miles, with a good bit of up and down hill between ; so come along." And Charley, the best of companions and oldest of friends, led the way to a dog-cart, into which we all mounted, with my belongings inside, and the rod case nursed behind by William. Charley was some six or seven years my junior—we had been at school together, but he came for a quarter as I was leaving. I used to thrash the fellows who bullied him, and when, some eight or ten years after, we met by accident, he was walking the hospitals—or running them more properly—while I had done a good turn of six or seven years at engineering, and got tired of it, and was living an idle, ne'er-do-well sort of existence. Since then our friendship had remained unbroken. We had planned this trip some time before, and he had gone down a day or two previous to Mrs. Wadlow's, who kept a little angling inn hight "The Rest," on the banks of the Brattle. A portion of the stream, a mile or two in length, belonged to the inn ; but I had obtained leave over some three or four miles of fine preserved water from Colonel C., the owner of the inn as well as of much of the property thereabouts. The colonel was down at the Denn, as his place was called at that time. He did not fish much himself, but liked now and then to walk along the banks with a rod, and perhaps, as Charley said, we might meet him during our wanderings on the morrow ; but, unless we had his special leave, while he was there, it would hardly be polite to fish much of his water. So for the first day or two we resolved to confine ourselves nearly to the inn water.

"There's the Rest—that light yonder." Two minutes after, we rumbled over an old one-arched stone bridge, wheeled round a corner, and pulled up. A pleasant glow came out from the old-fashioned honeysuckle-covered porch. Mrs. Wadlow, a portly widow with a pleasant smile, stood waiting to welcome us.

"John, gentleman's luggage up to No. 4. Mary, bring a chamber candlestick, and show the gentleman his room. One glass of sherry and bitters, sir, after your ride, and dinner will be ready in a quarter of an hour." There was a faint smell of fish frying somewhere, which had an appetising flavour. "Home-made bitters, sir—my own receipt." "Thank you." Dainty curtains as white as snow, a pleasant odour of lavender, diamond-paned window with monthly roses and honeysuckle all round it—everything as neat, clean, comfortable, and old-fashioned as need be. Ten minutes for a wash, and then down to crisp trout fried to a marvel, and a leg of small Welsh mutton hung to perfection, with ale that sparkled like sherry, and a bottle of sherry that the late Mr. Wadlow, a retired butler of the Colonel's, had chosen many years before, and which was not to be despised, being old, sound, and nutty; a noble cheese; and then what the Irishman so expressly calls the "materials," a fragrant pipe, and a comprehensive chat *de omnibus rebus*. "Chap here last week, name of Chafer; out-and-out good fisherman," said Charley in course of conversation, "but so jealous that he hates to see any fellow anywhere on the water. Catches baskets and baskets of good fish, even in quite still quiet places, you know, where I never could raise one."

"What fly did he use?"

"Ah, that's the point! Nobody knew."

"But wouldn't he tell you?"

"Not he. If you asked him, he'd say, with a sort of confiding smile, a smile that was child-like and bland, 'Oh! a little dun, you know—a little dun,' as if there wasn't forty little duns; and I knew he was lying too, ever so far, because I was once reclining on the bank, closer than he thought, on the other side when he passed, and I saw his fly fall on the quiet water, and it was a jolly big one—I could see that much."

"But couldn't you ever get a sight of his book?"

"Not likely. He took it to bed with him, and never parted with it on any pretence. He's worse than Jock Grant of Kennaweell, who said to me once, 'a loe ma brither verra, verra dearly; oh, verra dearly, intet; but 'd no trust him wi ma flee buik on any pratance, d'ye ken.'"

"What an infernal skunk! That's a sort of man I would have no hesitation in lifting up the hatches on, and sending any amount of weed down on him, on the first day of the Mayfly. Well?"

"Wait a bit. I had him at last."

"No! How did you sarcumvent that weasel?"

"Well, I'll tell yon. Just below Pwnwddel Wood at the end, under a bush, there's a nice, smart little run close under the bank. It's a rare place for good fish, but you never hardly see them rise, because there's an eddy there that sucks your line, as well as most flies, and such light matters, under water. There's always a rattling trout or two there, and it is a very

favourite cast of Chafer's. I was peeping in there over the bank one day, when I saw a big root under the bank, and an idea struck me I thought might be worth trying. I went and got a nice little blackthorn bush, got a bit of bell-wire, and fastened it to the stump of the bush, then made it fast to the old root, sinking the bush about two inches under water. The next morning I went down the same side again, got up into the wood about fifty yards or so from the river, where I could sight the proceedings without being seen, and waited. I had been there about half an hour, when I saw Chafer coming down the opposite bank, and I chuckled as he stopped over-right my trap. 'Swish, swoop!' The fly went across, just above the eddy; the line tightened. Chafer thought he had a fish, and struck merrily, and then I saw his rod bend. 'You're in it this time, old chap!' said I; and so he was, sure enough. 'What the—&c., &c., &c.—is this?' growled old Chafer; 'never knew anything settle there before. Some beastly bramble hung up, I expect; but it will come presently;' and he tried a steady strain. But blackthorn and bell-wire were too much for gut and horse-hair, and, after trying all he knew (as it was too deep to wade), he had at last to conclude for a break, which he effected, losing half his casting line. 'Humph!' he grunted, as he stumped off; 'come home up that bank to-night, and get that fly back; never do to leave it there.' 'Will you, my angel?' says I, as soon as he was out of sight; 'not if this child knows it. I went to the place, took off my coat, fisted the bush, undid the wire, and there on the topmost branch

of all was the coveted fly. This I feately removed, chucked the bush away, carefully destroyed all trace of my intervention, and walked quietly home with my prize—and there it is.”

It was a big sandy-red hackle, with a lemon-yellow silk body. I have seen this fly on several rivers, and, though it is used of double or treble the size of the ordinary flies, somehow this fly kills most of the big fish, and that even in bright weather and stillish water at times, though best for afternoons and evenings. What the trout take it for I can’t conceive.

“ Chafer came home that evening profoundly disturbed. He was awfully sulky and puzzled, but never opened on his loss, for fear someone should go a-hunting for the fly. Ha, ha ! he little knew that it was snug in my pocket. I always have a small stock of feathers and silk, in cases of emergency, and the next day I had the best bag I ever had ; and ha ! ha ! I beat Chafer. Mrs. Wadlow told me, with a chuckle, that Chafer saw my dish in the cellar, and glowered like thunder at them ; and whether or no he thought that I had had any hand in the fly job I don’t know, but the next day he went home quite suddenly, and I sent at once to you. Here you are, and to-morrow we’ll try Chafer’s pattern. And now one more glass, one more pipe, and then to roost.”

The birds, twittering in the creepers round my window, awoke me, and I lay in a lazy half slumber for some twenty minutes listening to them, and trying to comprehend their language. Oh, for Jean Jacques Rousseau. Let’s see, half dreaming, half musing, how is it it runs ? Ah !

"I shall not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau
If birds confabulate or no."

Hang it! What's the rest? Blessed if I haven't clean forgotten.

"I've heard it said by ancient sages,
That love of life increased with years ;
So much that in our later stages,
When pains grow sharp and sickness rages,
The greatest love of life appears."

Bother! What is all this? Are they connected, or did I learn 'em together in my youth, or is it all dreaming nonsense—this farrago of rubbish? "Tweetfe, tweet!" now what does that mean? Let's see. Oh, I have it! "Tweetle, tweet! what did you eat?" "Teroo, tweet! worms and wheat!" "Chip, chip, chip! Give us a bit!" It's breakfast they're talking about, don't you see; of course it is! I understand it all now, and I've a great mind to cry "Tchoo, tchoo, tchee! Coffee and tea!" "Crroo, crr-egs! Bacon and eggs!" Don't you see, it's all as easy as—as lying, as Hamlet says. Therefore, I won't lye any longer; but here goes for the tub! Ah! cool, fresh, v-v-v-ery fresh! The mornings are coolish, and the water is fre-e-sh, v-v-very fresh. Whoo, hoo! that's better; and now for a good rub down, and a hearty glow, a walk in the garden, a look round, and then for breakfast.

"Hallo, Charlie my lad, the top of the morning to you!" and we converse and look at the water till summoned to breakfast.

What a breakfast! ah!—the snug little parlour

with open French windows ; the little grass plat, with the birds hopping almost into the room, and keeping up a chorus of pleasant chirruping ; the snow-white cloth, and the fragrant smell of coffee and sweetbriar merged ; the delicate crisp toast and rashers of bacon, the gold and silver eggs poached to perfection, the yellow butter, the brown loaf, the thick cream, the home-made marmalade, and the noble collar of brawn on the sideboard. “Another cup of coffee?” “Thanks.” “Try a slice of this brawn.” “Two if you like.” “Mrs. Wadlow, fill those flasks with whisky, and put a slice or two of that brawn, with a chunk of brown bread, into the basket, and let Peter put those rods together, and give him a glass of cwrw, and let him come to us at the bridge.” And, lighting our weeds, we strolled out to the bridge, as all anglers do. It was a pretty stream as eye could wish to look on, and was here about thirty or forty feet wide, with a whirling eddying current going under the bridge arch, over the most golden of gravel ; a few weeds swayed about some fifteen yards above the bridge, and at the tail of these three or four nice half-pound fish lay, rising from time to time. It was delightful to watch them—how, with no visible effort, they sidled from under a tail of weed like a long tress of maiden’s hair, into a more open space, and then you would note the fore part of the fish rise steadily till the nose touched the surface, where the smallest dimple showed some wee fly sucked down to Tophet. As the trout resumed his horizontal five or six inches below the surface, now a passing cloud or some other triflē alarms him ; a flip of the tail, and he is up under

the shelter of the long weeds, whence ten minutes after he emerges, and takes up another post some two or three feet off, sending some smaller fish, who previously owned that happy hunting ground, away to seek fresh fields and pastures new.

"There he is, an old rascal!" said Charley, pointing to an overhanging bush on the right bank, under which a big trout of a good 2lb. lay, putting out his neb from the dark shade, now and then sucking in some floating treasure. "Ay, ay, and isn't he cunning? You can't get a fly easily to him except off this bridge, and then he can see you, and won't come; a left-handed man with a very short rod might get at him. Chafer nearly had him once; he put on trousers, waded up through the arch, and pitched left-handed to him with an eight-foot rod of old Ogden's, and the trout took; but, just as Chafer was getting him down below, he stepped on a round rolling stone, and went a mucker, got soaked to his shoulders, and of course lost the fish. I guess I snickered that time. Well, Peter, how goes it? This is Mr. F., Peter; you must show him some sport." "His honour's felcome, and I'll show him the fish in plenty surely, if his honour can catch them." I put up a Francis and a coch-y-bonddu first. "It's a coot cast, a fery coot cast. It'll be no easy to peat it," said Peter approvingly. The coch-y-bonddu was a sacrifice to Peter. The other I had tested truly and thoroughly years ago, and never found anything to beat it in Welsh waters. "And now, Peter, I'll go up to the cross-road, and will leave this bit to you; and when you get to the cross-road cut over the brow, and drop in at

High-bank, and I'll do the same again, and so on, and we'll meet to lunch at Barnedge." A few minutes afterwards I saw the top of his rod disappear over the next hedge.

The meadow before me was a charming bit of dimply, streamy water, running over lovely gravel and swaying weeds, with here and there a big lump of a boulder, round which the water fretted and swirled very prettily. On the far side was a hedge or a sort of plantation, which grew right on to the river's bank, with every here and there a big tree hanging its branches over, or a sturdy bush stretching into the stream. Indeed, the opposite bank was a rare place for trout hides, and many a fine pound fish lay there in fancied security, in the belief that he was safe from anglers' wiles, sucking in fly after fly without hesitation. On our side the bank had an odd bush or two here and there, and was broken, rising up and down, now high, now low ; but the fishing lay mostly beyond mid-stream and toward the other side. I now began, extending my line over the water pretty deftly. It may be a vanity of mine, but I fancy I can fish an opposite bank with overhanging stuff as well as 999 anglers out of a thousand, and I began searching the opposite bank, pretty closely followed by Peter, who never uttered a word, but looked on with a critical twinkle, which rather put me on my mettle. I had picked out a nice little fish or two, about three to the pound, and had just basketed a half-pounder, and I was sauntering leisurely on. There was a good fish, of full three-quarters or more, under a bush on the opposite side, rising regularly. I looked at him ; he

was in a perilous place, where a hang-up and a break looked about three to one if you tried for him, and I was nearly passing on, when I saw Peter glance across at the fish and then at me, as if he was taking my measure. So I took another look at the position. Under the tutelage of one of the best trout fishers I ever met, I had killed many such a fish on the Arrow, and I determined to essay the fish. He was in a hollow sort of bay, with a nice bit of bramble above and below, and black-thorn overhead. Apparently you could not put a fly within between two or three feet of him ; but I noticed that the eddy curled into the bay, and took things closer than seemed likely on the surface. I therefore got down the bank to the edge of the water, the bank being high there, and waited to see the effect of the movement, as I was now right opposite the fish, and not above ten yards from him. The bank did my business, however, and he kept on rising. Then with a preliminary flick or two upstream, to measure distance, &c., I sent the fly across and above the upper horn of the bay, leaving a slack line. The eddy caught the fly, wheeled it round the point to the inside, and carried it down further and further under the bush, until it rolled past within ten inches of Master Trout ; that is, it would have rolled past if he hadn't sheered out a little and opened his mouth to the Francis. I never saw a fish so astonished. He bolted out with prodigious indignation, and flounced hither and thither ; but when he found the game was bitter earnest ; he tried his hardest for his holt again. But I had worked him down a dozen yards or so, and was not long in slinging him round

into a bit of "quiet" below, where Peter ladled him out—a pretty fish, an ounce or two short of a pound, and very well made up (for a Welsh trout). From that time Peter began to talk, and ceased to be critical; I had clearly satisfied his standard, and I was told afterwards that his report of me at home was decidedly favourable.

The next meadow we got into a rocky ravine, and where the water foamed and broke in slaty ridges, and made black pools, and the tall ferns hung over the river in lush profusion; the trout here were not so large, though they were very active. The river in places was quite overgrown some fifteen feet above, and it was not easy fishing; but the peep as one looked up the river in the green and golden light, through an umbrageous tunnel of rockwork and leaves, with the foaming river for a bottom, was lovely in the extreme. As we went on wading and scrambling upwards, we came to another bend, and there at the far end was a little fall, which broke from rock to rock with a subdued, rushing noise, which came down through the rustling wood with a pleasant murmur.

Splashing, wading, crushing the fragrant water-parsley, we went on getting a whip-in here and a hang-up there, and now and then a little trout, till we came at last to the fall—a deep, black pool, with heavy eddies at the sides and behind the fall, between it and the rock; a broken and desperate-looking pool enough to get hold of a big fish in. As it spread out away from the fall it made a pretty basin, shallowing away into nice lying places, and a bar, over which the river poured down a rapid for twenty yards or so.

"A nice-looking pool that, Peter!" "Yes, sorr," said Peter; "it is called Rattle-rumble-ruffleum." I stared in amazement. "The fall of the talking trout," translated Peter. I made a mem. of that as I said, "There should be some big ones in that pool, Peter." "Big ones, sorr, yes, yes; but they're not easy to get out of it," as I soon found to my cost, for at the very second cast over the shallow, just where it deepened off to a dark amber, a big fish of 2lb. or 3lb. shot out of the profound, took my fly in a rush, and, as soon as he felt the hook, made one bolt round behind the fall, the whole weight of falling water coming down like a watery sledge-hammer on the line. What happened I don't know. There was a stramash, and the line came floating up on the eddy at the side with nothing on it, not even a fly. I'm afraid I let go a large-sized d——n. "I have seen that, sorr, fifty times," said Peter. And then we left the pool, and climbed up the fall to the top, where was a pretty stretch of water, and a short distance above a low wooden bridge.

"That is where Mister Charrels began; we shall have to take over yon brow before we can begin again;" and, gathering up the net and the basket, Peter stepped out boldly over a high, well-timbered bank or spur of a higher hill away on the left. The river made a circle round the base, and the bank shot down a rocky but wooded ravine, here some two or three hundred feet in depth, and as we worked along the edge we got peeps of the river purling and fretting round the base, and making very pretty fishy-looking pools. Anon we began to descend, and as we

did so we caught a glimpse of Charley flailing away up a very nice and rapid stream; with a shout to warn him of our presence, we hastened on, and finally reached the flat beyond, where the river grew more peaceful again, about one hundred yards above where he was fishing.

"Mr. Charrels is fond of that bit, sorr; Mr. Chafer is fond of it too, sorr; he was broken there a fortnight ago." "Broken," said I, very innocently; "what, in a big fish?" "I'm not sure, sorr, but I think not; I think not. He lost his fly, sorr, and a very favourite fly, and I have a suspicion, sorr, that somebody found it."

"Do you think they expected to find it?" I asked slyly.

Peter looked at me with a twinkle in his eye, and saw that I knew all about it, and all he said was: "Mr. Chafer, sorr, is a secretive jontleman, a very secretive jontleman. But Mr. Charrels is clever, sorr; he's very clever, sorr; and he has hooked a fish in the very spot, sorr, I see;" and off went Peter to lend a hand, as the fish was a tidy one.

When Charley came up, and we compared baskets, there was not much difference; he had 11 brace and I had $9\frac{1}{2}$, and there might have been perhaps a pound or two difference in the weight. I had two of 1lb. or close on it, four of $\frac{3}{4}$ lb., eight or nine half-pounders, and the rest three to the pound or a bittock less. It was a very pretty basket, and one of the best days of the year, so Peter said.

"Half a mile higher, and our water ends, and

the Colonel's begins ; indeed, this belongs to the Colonel, only he always makes me free of it. I will go on to that pine tree, which is about half-way up, and you fish up to it, and when we get to the top we'll lunch under the hay-rick, and then turn down and fish home, I taking the water you fished, and you taking that which I fished." This direction we followed out, picking up another brace or two of moderate fish *en route*. Arrived at the hay-rick, which was not far from the river, and handy to some shady trees, we were tolerably glad to sit and rest, and take toll of that brawn we collected at breakfast ; and after lunch we sat and chatted.

" By the way, Peter, what is the meaning of the Fall of the Talking Trout ? There must be a reason for the name."

" Yes, sorr," said Peter, taking out the shortest and blackest pipe extant thereabouts. " Yes, sorr ; it's a story or legend, sorr, of the days of the fairies, sorr."

" Let us hear it," and I passed him the flask. This was the yarn :

Long ago, long before the days of Llewellyn, there were two great chiefs—Prince C, with two l's, an m, a g, and a y ; and Prince Ll with three w's, one h, two y's, and a d. I can't go much nearer to the names, having a bad bronchial attack at present, and fearing for the consequence if I tried. Chiefs always fought in those days, for they had no Dr. Watts to tell them better. He with the three w's had had all the worst of it, and was forced to roam the land in disguise. He sought this spot in the disguise of a miller, and, seeing a likely spot for a mill, set to work to

build one; but somehow, build he never so skilfully, the stream rose in the night and washed his work away. He could not make it out. He sat near the edge of the pool one hot noon-tide, and there he fell asleep; and no sooner had slumber sealed his eyes than a lovely maiden form appeared to him in his sleep, rising above the water with a comb and a looking-glass in her hand, and thus spoke to him in accents like the whispering of the breezes of Araby over the rose gardens of Irem. “O beauteous Prince Three W’s, you lose your labour here; for know that this fall is under the dominion of a mighty magician, who holds me, the lovely Princess R, one h, two l’s, an m, and a y, under enchantment beneath its waters, in the form of a handsome spotted trout. If you can hook and pull me out safely on the land you will break the enchantment, and with it the power of the magician, and all his power will pass to me, and with it vast territory shall be thine. But there are two things to remember. The first is to slacken line as soon as I am hooked; and if you see the line get under the fall, be careful not to say ‘dam.’ Many have tried to catch me; but they held tight the line, and all said ‘dam,’ and so the magician had power over them, and the line was broken;” and Peter nodded gravely towards me, as if he were a mermaid and I a prince with three w’s. “Farewell,” said she, and she dove into the pool and disappeared, turning up a tail very like that of a 40lb. salmon as she did so. Then Prince Three W’s woke, and, searching in his pockets, he pulled out a fishing line which he always carried to provide his needs, and, fixing a bait upon it,

he cast it into the waters. No sooner had it sunk from sight than there was a great tug, and, as was his wont, Prince Three W's tugged again; but the line went under the fall. “D—” began the prince, and the line gave a great spang; but, fortunately, he remembered himself in time, and only said, “D—ear to cootness pless us,” and slackened off all the line he could. Then it floated clear of the fall, and coming in, with a willing hand he hauled flopping up the sloping bank a lovely trout; and no sooner had he got it safe upon the shore than it at once changed into the most beautiful princess that ever was seen; and, there being a chapel close by—a fortuitous circumstance which always happened on these occasions, no matter how deserted of all else, or how much one might wonder where the presiding priest got his congregation from.—Prince Three W's went there and married her at once, and became lord over all this country.—“Yes, sorr,” concluded Peter, “you may tepend upon it you must not say ‘tam,’ sorr, if you want to catch the fish.” I believe Peter was an nfernal old hypocrite; for I heard him cursing a fellow-countryman a few days after in the choicest Cymry—at least, if they weren’t curses, they sounded dreadfully like it, and rattled most confoundedly. However, to satisfy Peter, I declared like Caliban that

“No more dams I’ll make for fish.”

and so we finished our pipes in peace and tranquillity.

After this we once more got afoot, and fished our

way back to the inn, first mounting what Charley called the “cockchafer ;” and certainly it was a capital fly. It did better in the afternoon and evening than in the morning. With me it took the biggest fish, for I got seven brace of very pretty fish—not a small one, or one under half a pound, among them ; and Charley did nearly as well, and when we got home there was only a brace between us. I got sixteen brace and a half, which weighed 19lb., he having seventeen brace and a half, which weighed half a pound less.

After dinner, while we were smoking a cigar, the Colonel, who chanced to pull up *en passant*, hearing I was there, came in and sat and smoked a cigar with us. Quite an old gentleman of the old school, with all the manners and courtesy of a by-gone age—a model which, alas ! we have lost in the rush for wealth which vulgarises and degrades everything. He made us promise that we would fish his water, at any rate for two days, dining with him after our sport, which we did. I won’t recount the sport we had. The water was very lovely, running under high hollow banks ; many of the reaches could only be fished by wading up the middle and casting on either side with a short rod. But what lovely trout they were ! from $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. to 1lb., and now and then a fish of $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. ; and what sport these big ones would show ! I don’t know when I have enjoyed a couple of days so much. The slaughter was prodigious, and the Colonel’s hospitality was most remarkable, for he sent us down a *recherché* little hot lunch each day, with a bottle of rare old Cliquot dry with age, and came down to share it himself. As we had plenty of fish of our own, and didn’t

want the Colonel's, we just distributed our take among his tenants and cottars as we went, and nothing we could have done would have pleased the old gentleman so much. The fact is, I got the tip quietly off Peter with a view to ulterior proceedings, and it answered nobly. The old gentleman had a very proper notion that those who tilled the soil had a right to share the proceeds, and he always was most liberal with his game among the tenants and labourers; but, as he didn't fish, he couldn't extend it to the fish, and when anyone else thought of it, it pleased the Colonel hugely. The last day we spent on our own water to get a dish of fish to take home, and we contrived to get close on thirty brace, and, to my everlasting reputation with Peter, *that* two-pounder to top them up with. I laid myself down to him as we do in Hampshire, keeping well down out of sight, and he came at last, after looking many times. Of course he went under the bridge; but, as it was handy home, and I didn't mind a wetting, I followed him, and got him fifty yards below, and Peter talks of it to this day. I studied that fish, though, two or three times before I fished for him.

And that is how you should always do with a big one, my dear young friend and scholar. Find out his habits, tricks, and ways, and then make yourself as unobtrusive as possible, and do your level darnedest.

A STORM ON THE BRAWLE.

“Blow winds and crack your cheeks.”

“I FANCY we are going to have a storm, Charley,” I exclaimed, as we sat looking on a charming pool on the Brawle, overshadowed by gigantic hornbeams hard by, and overhanging alders close at hand. Half-buried in bracken, at our feet flowed the calm, still stream. The pool was now glassy and without a ruffle, every tree and leaf reflected in it as in a mirror; on the other side a perfect thicket of rank vegetation, with huge burdock leaves and a plant-like wild rhubarb, rose waist high; and so still was the air that the faintest rustle could be heard under the broad green leaves, and that friend of our boyhood, the *viridis lacertus* of the *Delectus*, could not wag his tail without being heard—perhaps I should have said could not have done so had he been found there, about which I have a doubt. No rustle of leaf, no splash of fish. The wild bee cunningly hid himself in the deepest foxglove bell, and ceased his humming for a time. No twitter of bird nor creak of cricket. Nature was getting under shelter, and suggesting to us the desirability of getting under shelter too. Now I don’t mind saying that I have a constitutional objection to being under

trees in a thunderstorm, and that my friend Charley B. has another constitutional objection to be out in the middle of an open meadow under like circumstances ; and we have both constitutional objections to wet jackets when we have no change handy ; so, after taking a squint to windward and another to leeward, one aloft and one all round, we concluded that shelter would be as well till the storm had passed.

“The Goat” was only about half a mile off, just over the brow yonder ; so, shouldering our rods and settling our creels, which were not untenanted by our morning’s labours (for sport had been good until the storm began to gather, and we had each about three brace of nice half-pounders or thereaway to the good), we stepped out lustily. We had not got half-way to “The Goat,” however, when the clouds, which had been slowly rising over the point of the hill on our right, gave an ominous growl, and commenced rising and forming quicker and quicker. In three minutes the sun was blotted out, and down came the rain in a deluge, and for the last two hundred yards or so, which we took at racing speed, the rain drenched us, and the wind battered us, while lightning and thunder hissed and roared above our heads incessantly ; and we plunged into “The Goat” streaming. Placing our rods on the hooks in the long stone passage, we divested ourselves of our creels and entered the large kitchen, where a fire on the hearth and a couple of vacant ingle nooks wore the most inviting aspect possible. We were pretty well drenched, and got into the most favourable position for drying. Having kindled up the fire afresh, and concocted a pot of

foaming hot purl, we then lighted our pipes and enjoyed ourselves. The storm roared without, but we were pretty snug, and did not regard it. Presently two or three other brothers of the angle came in, and one or two labouring men driven from their work, and conversation ensued. Among the anglers was an old chap known as "Owld Johnny"—I never heard that he had any other name—a genial, cheery old chap. His father left him some ten or a dozen acres of land, the remnant of a good property, which he as well as *his* fathers before him had done their best to dissipate; and on this, with the fruits of his rod, the old chap contrived to make out a living. He was a very good old fellow, wonderfully liberal to his brother anglers in the matter of hints or information—often very valuable to a stranger. I have known him give up a good stream where he was pulling out the spotted-beauties just to let some poorer or less fortunate brother try his hand; and I have known him even take the very fly off his line for you. Such kindly feeling of course made him many friends, and no one who knew him would have done a shabby thing by Owld John on any consideration. Many a dozen of fine gut or hooks, or other such necessaries, did one or the other bestow on Owld John, with packets of tobacco, pipes, and such trifles.

Owld John smoked his pipe in front of the fire, Charley and I on either side, and the others scattered.

"How did the fish die to-day, John?"

"I've know'd 'm die better, Mesr Cha's; but still there wur no gurt cause to grizzle till the thunner come."

"Did you ever catch 'em *in* a thunder storm, John?" I asked.

"Many's and many's a time, sir; but then 'm riz bad afower it, an' it sim like to stir 'm up."

"I mind," said another sage, "hooking a turble big fish in a thunner starm once."

"Ay, ay, Beenjamine, we'en heerd o' that. Tell the genelmen the story, Beenjamine."

"A don't mind tellin' of the story, Johnny, if 'e'll zing us 'Vish Vair' first."

"Thee be sharp on a chap, Beenjamine; not as I minds singin' a mite or mossel—only Mesr Cha's a moutn't keer for my singin'; an' as vor Mesr Vrank, a've eerd 'n a duzun times, a wot."

"Not quite so many, old friend, and certainly not so often but I'd like to hear it again," said I. "Mrs. Calliper, fill up the brown jug; the storm is passing away, but the river will be thick for a couple of hours; so we can spare the time."

"Mesr Vrank," whispered Owld John, "'ee'l hev such a even's vishin' if 'ee'l coom wi' I."

I nodded shortly, knowing well what the old man's offer meant; and, the jug being by this time replenished, Owld John took a swig, blew up his pipe to full furnace heat, put himself in an attitude, skewered a fly on the ceiling with one eye as he rolled the other to the tune, and, sawing the air with the hand that held the pipe, commenced. The song evidently had been suggested by an old nautical chorus, which runs in the same strain, and was well-known in years gone by, when nautical choruses were oftener heard than they are now, and the wooden walls of old

England were real walls. But let us listen to Owld John.

VISH VAIR.

When veather he first teached I vor to fish,
He says to me, Johnny, this here be my wish—
Do 'ee always vish vair, my lad, ne'er goo astray,
For who follys sich practices, I pities they.

I pities they, I pities they, who follys such practices, &c.

Says I, veather, I 'ont, I says, darned if I do,
But I'll go'n pull a zingle hair from the red coo ;
And I'll pluck a red heckle from th' owld cock so gay,
And them as vish totherwise, I pities they.

I pities they, &c.

Then I pulls the red coo out zum two or dree thick,
She says, " Goo easy, John, or I'll lend thee a kick ;"
And I plucks the owld cock, as he to me did zay,
Curck-a-too, curck-a-too, I pities they.

I pities they, &c.

Then I ties up a heckle, an catches a trout,
An he says, likewise, as I pulled 'n out,
" Why, John, what be'st oop to to sarve me thik way ?
Who follys sich practices, I pities they.

I pities they, &c.

So I sets down and thenks a bit what I'd 'a done,
Vor, though they dwon't zeem to, yet I likes the fun ;
And though I gets the spoort, ye see they gets the play
And them as down't like it, whoy, I pities they.

I pities they, &c.

Then here's to the lads of the horsehair and hackle,
Confusion to them as use other like tackle,
Your worms and your minneys, loikwise salmon pay ;
Who follys such practices, I pities they.

I pities they, &c.

Owld John's singing was perfectly indescribable. In the high notes his voice cracked in the most laughable manner, and he indulged in all sorts of twists and twiddles, which among his countrymen were regarded as very high art. On this occasion he excelled himself, and frequently got so involved in these cadences that there seemed no possible channel by which he could extricate himself ; but John, with a total ignorance of music or harmony, somehow contrived, through the assistance of the minor key, always to alight on his feet again. When the last pity for benighted bait fishers died away, great was the applause, and John puffed up his pipe again, took another swig, and nodded to Beenjamine, who accordingly took up the running.

" Talking o' thunner starms, mates, ye mind talk o' Philip Gorm ? Well, it was before your time, maybe. Phil had been wildish when a young man, and had picked up some bad companions ; but arter he married Ellen Tucker, he settled down like to steadier ways. Phil was whipper-in to Lord Maltimore's hounds, and a good rider and a keen sportsman, and was in high favour with the lord, so that there was every prospec', when old Abel Harkaway died or superanywated, that Phil would take his place. Phil was happy as a king at this time, and but that Ellen was a bit flirty in her ways—not meanin' nothin' wrong, ye know, but lightish-mannered like—Phil had never a trouble. Unfortunately, he had still an acquaintance with one of his old wild companions, Dan'l Hopper, and a darned bad 'un was Dan'l Hopper. He come between Phil and Ellen, and made mischief. It's too long a yarn,

mates, to tell how it rose and how it went on. From bein' pleasant and confident with one another, the two young creeturs grew distant and suspicious, and Dan'l was always by to make things worse, and worse they was accordin'. Phil at last took up to drink agin, which he'd throwed over when he married, and Dan'l was always the one to put it on him. Fact was—I may as well tell the truth at once—Dan'l had paid 'tentions to Ellen hisself, but the owld volk, knowin' him for what he wor, would not have it at no price, and Ellen besides was fond ov Phil. So Dan'l resolved to show 'm all arterwards that they got no such great catch wi' Phil, and that's 'ow he did it, and poor Phil was often landed by Dan'l quite teetosticated at the end of the lane to his cottage. Well, old Abe died one day, and, 'stead ov Phil havin' his place, as he'd expected at one time, he had become so onregler-like that the lord got a fresh man altogether ; and, as Phil on'y got wuss arter this, he ended by being turned out of his place altogether. This here busted of him, mates, and one evening, when half drunk he overheard a talk 'twixt Ellen and Dan'l, in which Dan'l was a-recountin' all Phil's faults, and a tryin' to persuade her to go off to Merrikay 'long of him. He didn't stop for no change, you med be sure at that, but he went right in at him, an' gev that there Dan'l sich a darnation caterwollopin' as he never see nor hear on sin' he was raised. He knocked 'n down, and pulled 'n up, and he knocked un down agin, till there worn't no two feayturs of his face as knowed one another. Lor', how he did mash un, to be sure ! and he warned un agin comin' wi'in 'alf a mile of his

cottage agin, on promise of another dose of the like. Dan'l was the laffin poast of the whole neighbourhood for weeks arter ; for he wor painted lovely, and that's a fact.

" Well, it was talked on, you may be sure, all about, and the lord come to hear on it. Arter this, as Dan'l didn't dare come anighst the place, Phil and Ellen got on a mort better, and Phil left off drinkin' again, and got steadier-like ; and one day the lord, who'd always a-liked him, come down to his cottage and had a long talk with 'em both, and took poor Phil on again, and Phil and Ellen got on again like two turkey doves. But that 'ere Dan'l was a white-livered feller as bottled his feelin's. He didn't say nothin' to no one, but he thought the more, and the d——l got him in his meshes surely. One day there'd bin thunder all about, and a storm was a-blowin' up ; but I wanted a dish of fish, and was out a-spinnin' a minney in Basham Weir." At this Owld John shook his head deprecatingly. " Well, I knows, I knows, John, but I wanted 'em 'tickler an', as I said, I was spinnin' the minney there when the storm come on, and it got so awsome dark I left my rod planted by the weir, and got under the old weir shed for shelter. I 'adn't bin there not ten minutes, the thunder roarin', and the lightnin' a-flashin' over head and all round, when I see a big lump o' something come rowling over the weir. I thort 'twus the root o' a tree, and run out to get my tackle out ; but 'twas too late, for in a second I'd hooked it, my rod bent double, and the next moment away the tree went and I lost my minney. Arter a time the storm cleared off,

and I made up my bag and strattled up the bank. As I was goin' I sees Ellen a-comin' down.

"‘Oh, Ben !’ says she, ‘ave you see my Phil ?’”

“‘No, Nell, I ain’t,’ I says, ‘not this ways.’”

“‘Where ever can he be, then ?’ says she, a-lookin’ frightened-like.

“‘He’s all right,’ I says ; “he towld me this marn as he wor goin’ up to kennel to worm some puppies, and like he’s there now.”

“‘No,’ says she, ‘no ; I’ve been there, and he’d left ; and, Ben,’ she says, a-sinkin’ her woice to a terrifying whisper, ‘little Billy Shorter tell me ’as he seen him an’ Dan'l a’avin’ words just below Clapstone Mill ; and the lad said he run away ’cos he was frightened, and Dan'l had that big stick as he carries o’ late, and was flourishing it round and talkin’ very loud and angry.”

“‘The Lord be good to us !’ I says ; for my ’art gev a bound as I thought of that tree stump as come over the weir ; for, ye see, it was so dark I couldn’t see rightly at the time. Anyhow, I determined to go down to the next mill, and see if it wor really a stump, or—or anythin’ else ; so I persuaded Ellen to go home, and promised to go and look for Phil up at the house, or here at the Goat, where he likely took shelter from the weather. Then I takes my way down to Jaffer’s Mill, and my heart fell lower and lower as I see the miller and his man on the rack a clearin’ it of some-thin’ wi’ poles ; and before I got up to ’m, they hauled it ashore ; and as I come up I saw it was poor Phil, sure enough, stark dead, with a big welt on the top of his head ; and, as they turned him over, there was my

minney a-sticking on his jacket. ‘ Wot’s this clenched in his ’and ?’ says the miller; ‘ a big white bone button ! ’ That ’ere button, mates, hanged Dan’l Hopper, an’ I went to see it. Ellen keeps the lodge at the lord’s, and her son, as you know, is first whip to the young lord, and ’ll be huntsman in time. But the weather has cleared up beautiful, mates, and now for the river. There’ll be trouts i’ the pan to-night.”

We went with Owld John, who put on for us a special persuader—a great medicine of his own contrivance. The water was clearing already, and I never shall forget that evening’s fishing. Between us we mustered forty-four brace of splendid trout, many of them up to a pound, and some over. Having taken half a dozen brace each of the best for our own use, we made Owld John a present of the rest, and vastly pleased he was, you may be sure. “ And that,” he said, as we left him at a weir which we had not seen before, “ is Basham Weir, where Beenjamine lost his minney.” Confound Basham Weir ! the place looked horribly gloomy and eirie in the shadows, and it was not till we got home to lights, supper, and our own easy chairs that we managed to shake off the creepy feeling we then contracted.

WHITE TROUT AND SALMON FISHING IN GALWAY.

“With debts galore and fun far more,
Oh ! that’s the man for Galway.”

I FANCY that my first insinsement, as an Irishman would call it, of Galway, was derived from the excellent ballad of which the above forms the chorus. How many years ago is it that Mr. Miles Bodkin first chaunted that redoubtable stave for our delectation, and Charles O’Malley hove the tumbler at his head first and shot him after ? and a great performance, too, allowing weight for age. How we boys revelled in Galway and his wild absurdities in those days. No one could ride to our ideas like a Galway Blazer ; no one could shoot like a gentleman from Galway. In fact, the gentleman from Galway was all that was brave, accomplished, humourous, chivalrous, and half a hundred other things besides. “Distance” truly “lends enchantment to the view ; ” a nearer acquaintance has, of course, dispelled all these illusions—and the gentleman from Galway retains but a faint hold ou our maturer susceptibilities ; we know him better and are less infatuated. But the white trout and salmon of Galway are indeed objects in which we

truly rejoice, and the more we meet them the more highly we appreciate them. Their company is never objected to. They are never *de trop* or in the way, no matter how many of them may be anxious to cast themselves upon our hospitality, and we have seen them pretty thick in Galway, too, at times. Who has not stood in former years on Galway Bridge and looked down upon the huge tumultuous shoal of salmon which tenanted the stream below the weir when the water was low. Hundreds on hundreds of salmon, of from 20lb. to 5lb., rolling about over each other as thick as peas on a shovel or gudgeon on a shallow—a wondrous sight seen at one time when the river was prosperous by reason of the wise system pursued towards it, but seen no longer, alas, for netting and snatching, and gaffing, and all manner of bedevilments have changed all this, and the gay and festive salmon is not the fish for Galway for the time being. Let us hope for better times and a better system once more. There is a deal of water in Galway, very much of it very fishy water; and between great lakes and rivers in all directions, Galway may be considered as pretty considerably of a wet country; and as a friend once described it—"where it ain't stone walls or mountains it's rivers and lakes or else bogs," and allowing for a vivid imagination, he was not so very far out, particularly at all near the coast.

Take the map of Galway, and look along the north coast of Galway Bay. Starting from Galway, right round the coast as far as Westport, every inlet has its salmon river or white-trout stream, which is more or less connected with a lake or chains of lakes. What

a paradise it is for a fisherman! What lovely scenery! what bold, striking mountains in every variety of mountain architecture those Twelve Pins present, and how lovely some of the lakes are. What can exceed the beauty of Kylemore? It is a slice out of Killarney. What more striking than the rugged, seamed crests of the mountains that dominate Lough Inagh? what more sombre and stern than the gloomy scenery of the Killeries? It is a beautiful trip, even for the tourist, from Galway to Westport; but to the angler, who can get well on the various waters, it is a considerable task to achieve, and in all probability he would find from Galway to Clifden enough for one season. The Spiddle, the far-famed Costello, the Inver, Ballinahinch, Doohullah, and Clifden will make a very big hole in a season if all the lakes and streams are fairly fished. Many of these waters can be got at now by subscription, or by tickets for shorter periods. At Ballinahinch the angler has the choice of three big lakes and a river to fish upon; and he can have a ticket for a single day if he desires it, and the sport is often excellent. What they do on the Costello, and have done formerly, sounds almost fabulous, so considerable are the takes of white trout. On Doohullah years ago, when the lakes were in the occupation of Mr. Young, I had a real good day. I don't quite recollect the number, but I fancy it was seventy or eighty white trout, weighing over a hundredweight, which we took between us. The largest fish was a big one of 7lb.; the run of them $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb., some bigger, some smaller; but the sport was beautiful. They are such sporting fish, leaping out of the water, dancing,

twisting, darting here, there, and everywhere. You never had your fish landed till he was in the net, and then he'd do his best to jump out of it if you were careless. The number of false rises we got was prodigious. Every minute some silvery fellow came flopping up at the fly, spanking it with his tail perhaps, or rolling over it, and now and then getting nailed in one of his fins, and showing tremendous sport thereupon. It is the prettiest fishing I know—far more lively than salmon. Every now and then, too, a brown trout would diversify the fun. These were not large, but they were not at all contemptible—half and three-quarters of a pound now and then, and sporting little blades they were. There were no salmon. The experiment of introducing salmon failed, the head waters not being equal to carrying salmon, so that after their first return they never came again, that is to say, in any considerable number, though a few constantly stray into the lakes even yet, and one is taken now and then. Our take made a rare show at night, and covered the stone floor of the larder with silvery forms in a most gorgeous way. In those days, or soon after, I fancy one could get on Doohullah by paying. Mr. Young, I believe, still retains the lakes in his own hands, but whether he lets them or takes rods on them, or what his arrangements are, I do not know. I only know that they are the best white trout lakes in Galway, and not even second to Costello.

I have visited Ballinahinch two or three times. The first time was many years since, in the early days of the *Field*, when I went over a large extent of

country as the *Field* commissioner, inspecting and reporting upon fisheries and moors. One of my objects was to report on any infringements of the fishery regulations, and I raked out a good many, where gaps were tampered with by means of boards, and Sunday fence times made of no avail by sham rails. This was a very artful dodge. A salmon cage, as all who may care to know, is a square box of upright rails, through which the water flows, but between which the salmon cannot force his way. In order to give the salmon a free passage, one had only to pull up two or three of the middle rails in the back row, and the salmon could easily get through. Even if these rails were pulled up a foot or two, it answered the purpose, and this was the plan pursued occasionally; but there was a very artful dodge practised in some places to make the casual passer-by believe that the rails *were* raised, when in reality they were not. Suppose these rails to be from top to bottom each six feet long, they used to get three or four spare ones eight or nine feet long, and, pulling out the six-footers, push in the nine; so that from the shore it looked as if these rails had been lifted three feet, thus giving a free pass to the fish, when nothing of the kind existed. Of course the entrance to the weir in which the boxes were was always locked on such occasions, and the man with the key was always mislaid on a Sunday, which was the case when I got to this weir; and finding that I could not get to the boxes, I determined not to be done, but whipped off my clothes, plunged in and swam to the weir, saw all I wanted to, and swam back to my clothes. The fly-

fishing for salmon in those days was not perhaps as good as it might be, nor so good as it is now ; of course it made no difference to the sea trout, which could get between the rails up to 2lb. or 3lb. weight, and great takes of them were often made. But time passed on, the law was amended and looked after better, and the fishery improved ; and for the last year or two, during which even the nets have been off, great sport was at times obtained. I happened to be passing Ballinahinch some years since at the time of our oyster commission, with my three brother commissioners. We had stuck pretty well to our business, and, having had a close turn of work, which one wasn't to be paid for, I thought I would take a day's play ; so I stopped behind and took a day on Lough Inagh, the upper lake of the series which discharges through the river into Roundstone Bay. It was a lovely drive to the lake, which we reached at length ; the boat was soon prepared, and my boatmen (Pat and Mick—all boatmen were supposed to rejoice in those cognomens) embarked ; my rod was put together and strung, and off we went. "And now about flies, let me see." I had put up a beautiful selection of about six or seven dozen of Connemara white trout and salmon flies of the choicest make, which I had by me when I left home. "Let me see ; a black, a blue, and a—hullo ! what's this ? why, where are they ? Confound it ! why, they're gone ! Clean gone ; three packets of the best absent without leave ; but how could it be ?" I searched pocket after pocket frantically. *Absit ! omen*—and it is an omen surely. A thought flashed on me ; it must be that malingering

miscreant at Kilrush. We had gone out a-fishing at Kilrush, and taken with us over to the river the most abominable thief and atrocious scoundrel in Ireland. The villain was given my basket and other things to carry ; my book was in it. After we had got home we found that he had emptied a large whisky flask belonging to one of my friends. That didn't so much surprise us ; but he had emptied a big cigar case full of choice Cabanas belonging to another. Well, that surprised us a little, as beans to a Jackass would be equivalent to choice cigars to him. As for me, I did not at the time discover any loss, and I hadn't as much sympathy for my fellows as I might have had, and, indeed, ought to have had. I was heavily punished for it, for here I was, launched on Lough Inagh, ten miles from home, with only an odd casting line or two which was wound round my hat. All my new spare ones he had *frisked* as well, and not a fly to fit the occasion, save one or two spare salmon killers. It was a deuced funny position, wasn't it ? ha, ha ! humorous rather, eh ? I regret, however, that I didn't appreciate it ; but if anathemas could effect that scoundrel's salvation, he'd need a full-sized dispensation from his Holiness himself to be quit of them.

“ O turpissime,
Vir nequissime,
Sceleratissime—quissime—issime,
Never I trow have the Servi Servorum
Had before 'em
Such a breach of decorum,
Such a gross violation of morum honorum,
And won't have again sœculâ sœculorum.

Come hither to me, my commissioners three,
Whole or in partibus,
In car or in cartibus.

Hither to me Mr. Secretary,
Board clerk or chairman of every degree,
Go fetch me a book, go fetch me a bell
As big as a dustman's, and a candle as well,
And I'll send him where good manners won't let me tell."

The unheard of, illimitable, prodigious scoundrel !
The unsanctified, interminable, abandoned thief !
"I rage, I melt, I burn !" — like Polyphemus.
Polyphemus ! Ha ! *Monstrum horrendum informe ingens.* Inguns ! to be sure—like Mark Twain—"he stole my horse, likewise my blanket, also my rifle, and then said, 'Good bye, brudder ; I shall meet you in the happy hunting grounds.' If he does, I guess there'll be a fite !" And, if I meet Paddy from Kilrush on the banks of Styx, I guess there'll be another. Therefore, avoid thee, aroint thee, Paddy of Kilrush ! That, sir, is a man, sir, who, by George, sir, I would—would—almost—yes, I would—present Home Rule to, and there'd be not the least occasion for him to visit the Styx ! Poor Paddy ! poor Paddy ! But no ! that would be too—altogether—don't you know—

There was corn in Egypt, however, yet ; for a keeper lived on the banks, and we managed to interview him, and got a cast or two from him ; so we went to work. Salmon had been very scarce at that time ; I think there had not been one killed for a fortnight at the Inn, and not for a month on Lough Inagh. But, I am more lucky, as a rule, in my salmon weather than in trout, and there was a fine rough breeze on to-day,

which made a bit of rough-and-tumble. My object had been white trout, not salmon ; however, after catching half a dozen trout, the boatmen lured me on to try for a salmon, and I put up a size larger fly, and had not been long at it, when a boil under water was followed by a screech and a bending rod, and, after a dull turn of pully-hauly, which had not much excitement in it, I got within gaffing distance a red fish of about 7lb. or 8lb. After this I had one or two rises and refusals ; but, some distance further up, I stuck in another. He fought rather better, and gave a little trouble ; but he came out at last, about 1lb. heavier than the other. By this time I had to land ; for, to add to our other misfortunes, in embarking our traps one of the men spilt the whiskey bottle on a stone, and all our stock went to invigorate the heather. I never saw an accident so earnestly and truly deplored. But a day's fishing without whiskey in Ireland was a thing utterly unheard of ; so I had got the keeper to go across the hill to the nearest pub and fetch us a bottle, and we now landed to get it. My men were greatly excited with my sport, and the keeper opined that we had caught a salmon ; but, when he was told "two," he was so incredulous that he walked down to the boat to see for himself, and expressed his amazement ; and he said, as we shoved off, in a very sneering sort of way, "Perhaps ye'll catch another." "Sure we will," said Mick, "and another to the back of it ; for the Lough's just paved wid 'em, and his hanner knows how to cometha thim ;" and, before the keeper was well out of sight, I was fast in another, and tha biggest yet. This fish

towed us a long way, the tackle and rod being light ; but, in the end, he gave way too, and came into the boat, weighing $11\frac{1}{2}$ lb. If the others were ugly brutes, this was a worser—lean, discoloured, and with an incipient gib. The creatures must have been months in the lake. They were so ugly, I was fairly ashamed of them. Clean they certainly were, and no doubt would eat well ; but they were decidedly unlovely to look at. “Here, hang it ! I can’t stand these beasts ; shove off after the sea trout, I won’t have any more of these creatures ; I’m fairly ashamed of them.” At this the men were dumbfounded. “Sure, any of the gintlemen at the inn would give their ears to have the sport my honour was having, and mayhap I’d catch as many more ; and it would be something to talk of—the day of the year intirely and altogether.” But I would not listen to the voice of the charmer, took off my salmon fly, and went away after the sea trout, of which I collected a dozen or so.

We had a very jolly day, lunching on one of the islands ; and three salmon *are* three salmon, and count for something in point of sport ; so I enjoyed the day greatly. And, as for my two companions, when I landed, and handed either of them one of the smaller fish, bidding them cut the other in two and share it, for I wouldn’t show them at the inn, their delight knew no bounds. For me, I got my sea trout, and that was all I wanted ! and I don’t know a pleasanter day, when the fish are plenty and in the humour, than a day on Lough Inagh. Some prefer Ballinahinch lake, or Derryclere, and, no doubt,

you kill more fish on them ; but Inagh is good enough for me, and prettier sport or more enjoyable is hardly to be had. But, if any of my friends want to go to Ballinahinch, if they'll take my advice, they won't go *via* Kilrush, unless they can see their way to conferring penal servitude on *that* unmitigated villain. Moreover, beyond all, if they have a bottle of choice whisky with them, if they'll be advised by me, they won't water the ferns with it.

REMINISCENCES OF AN ANGLER.

"Pati necesse est multa mortalem mala."—NAEVIOUS.

ANGLER'S MISERIES.

ANGLERS have to put up with all sorts of miseries—yes, miseries; don't let the general reader imagine that the word is a bit too strong. Sheep-washing, weed-cutting, mill-drawing, &c., are often the cause of an amount of disappointment and vexation that the uninitiated would by no means credit. Suppose you have been looking forward for weeks or months to *that* day at Sir Jabez Jawley's—since, for some polite attention which you had the luck to be able to bestow on him at the Bank, that haughty aristocrat gives you yearly a day's fishing at Beddlington End Park—a privilege rarely granted to anyone who has not "a position," which as a Bank clerk of course you have not; for the joint-stock "Bart." is nearly as big a toady and curmudgeon since he was Bart'ed as before. Never mind; the fishing when you *do* get it is real, and is equal to from seven or eight to fifteen or twenty brace of good trout, running from $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. to $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb., with perhaps a whopper to make up the tale, according to the weather, the day, and the skill of the pis-cator—yours of course being labelled "A 1, first class, teak-built, and copper-fastened" (greenheart-built and

bronze-fastened, perhaps, would better express the implement on which your skill greatly depends. What hope, what anticipation, are involved in that day's fly-fishing! —that day of pleasant rest and enjoyment out in the green fields and pastures, with gurgling streams and rustling trees, and free birds singing high up in the sky, and trees around you all day long. Ah, to a country-bred, town-imprisoned fellow, who has seen nothing but bricks and mud for five or six months, *that* is a day! How you hope and fear about the weather! how you rejoice when you wake up and find that the day is brisk but cloudy, with the wind S.W., and weather settled. Rush off to the early train helter-skelter, down thirty miles to Beddlington. What joy, what delight, what filling of the lungs with only semi-adulterated air! what recognition of familiar objects! How you snatch a hearty breakfast at the Jawley Arms, and then hunt up old Vargiss (qu. corruption of Verjuice), the keeper, whose usual dour, sour face actually has a grim smile on it to-day as he takes your net and basket and follows you down to the river. Yes, and hurrah, here is the river! Good heavens! what is this? Blueish-white like milk and water, and as thick as pea soup! Why, they're never sheep-washing! But "eess, tha be," says Vargiss, with another half-covert grin, for which you feel inclined to strangle him on the spot. "Eess, tha be. Tha begun yesterday, and wunt 'a dun till to-morrer. Thought as you'd sartain to 'a knowed it." "Knowed it! how should you 'a knowed it?" Vargiss is "wery sorry," but he doesn't look it, for he can't bear you ever since you killed those four good trout below

the bridge which Vargiss made show trout of ; but “m’hap they’ll ’a left off by six o’clock or so, and then the water ’ll get clearer.” This is adding insult to injury, and you feel tempted to throw Vargiss neck and heels into the mill-head. What use will the clearing of the water be to you, with the fish sickened and half-poisoned by tar, grease, dirty wool, and all manner of abominations ? And this is the end of all your anticipations ! If anyone had told you that you had lost 500*l.* in the Dodgeryquita mine, you would not have felt half so inclined to sit down and fret. Such a thing as this is enough at the moment to break a man in two.

Well, then, there are weeds. What I have suffered from weeds in my time no one can tell. I can’t, for I cannot remember a twentieth of it now, fortunately. I have previously related how “the O. B.” used to tar out Sam and me with his weeds, and finally got us turned us out of our fishing ; but I think the worst spell I ever had was at Fordingbridge. I once stopped at the Star there for a whole fortnight, to have the very first day of the Mayfly. There were six large trout in a special pool which I had daily watched—the smallest was hard on 4lb., and I wanted to have the first chance of them with the Mayfly, everything else being hopeless. At length the day came. The fly got up well. I went to the pool. The fish were just beginning to notice it. I put up my tackle. I saw one or two flies taken by the big fellows, when down came the weeds thick and strong, and the water was covered for hours. Some wretch of a miller had saved them up solely to spoil his neighbours’ sport on the

first rise of the fly, and he thoroughly succeeded. That miller's dam was not half as comprehensive as some of mine. Will any jury of fly-fishers tell me what that iniquitous miller deserved?

What can be more aggravating, for instance, than to have a day on a first-rate water given to you—a water which you have coveted a day or for years, and to go on a good day with wind and weather favourable, and to find when you are fishing it that the fish are very restless and don't take the fly well at all, although you always thought it a first-rate taking water, and have heard of grand takes from it, and then to hear as you are going home with an empty creel that the keeper was seen walloping the water all down with a brace of salmon flies or a minnow half-an-hour before you got there. How you bless that keeper and love that proprietor. Or to find in a similar case, as I did last year, the water suddenly sinking and running away, the weeds rising, and all the fish migrating upwards. The water being run off into the meadows, for the nonce, *quite by accident*, of course; or to go for a day on a good water—a day which turns out blazing hot and sunny, and utterly hopeless. "Never mind," you think, "at this time of year the fish rise best in the cool of the evening, and if they won't take in the hot sun, they will be sure to do so then, and two or three brace of good ones will reward you, and then as you have watched the sun sink down, and vanish behind the distant hills, and marked with delight the dimples beginning to grow upon the stream, suddenly to observe a profound cessation of

them, and looking up to perceive a light blue mist rising off the stream, herald of an evening fog, during which, as all good fishermen know, no fish will rise. Or to come down below the mill after a similar day, elate with hope, with a lovely evening before you, and find all the water shut off, and the river empty, and the fish cutting about with their backs above water. Or to get the day of the year when the May-fly is at its best on your best water, and to find a sharp north wind blowing slap on your face, and driving every dry floating-drake back into your waistcoat-pocket. To toil on and on and on, baulking and blundering, and spoiling fish after fish, straining your rod to pieces, and hearing ferrule after ferrule squeak like mice in a trap ; and finally, when you do get a real, true, and unexpected rise, hitting him such a pelt, that your top goes in the brazing, and being wet with the drizzle, refuses to be removed, even though you smash one of your only remaining grinders in trying to screw it out with your teeth ; or in the midst of your best day of the season, when the sport is at its best, and you expect to do something to talk of for your life, and to astonish the Browns, likewise the Smiths and Joneses, dropping by accident into some beastly water-hole up to your waist, and having to go home five miles to change. How often have all these things, particularly the latter, happened to me ! Then there are all the miseries connected with bad gut or hooks, which all give way at the supreme moment. The fly with the old loop which you hook that 20lb. salmon with, and which carefully dissevers itself at the first

run, and all that range of difficulties, baiting a swim on the Thames, secretly, for three nights, and then coming to it early on the fourth morning to fish for the great club prize, and finding some other fellow stuck in it and hauling the big barbel out rapidly. Don't you enjoy it? Eh! And now for a wind up, here is a veracious history for your consideration.

Some fifteen or twenty years ago, my friend T. and I had usually one day's fishing given us in the season on a prime part of the Chess. In those days the Chess contained a fine stock of fish. The only fault of this bit of fishing was, that it was rather short and restricted, and it was very soon fished over, when we had to give it a rest before we could go at it again. Still we usually did pretty well with it, as it swarmed with fish, and we always looked forward to our day there as one of exceeding enjoyment. It was a long turn for us, as we had eighteen miles across country to drive to it, and the same distance back, of course, in the evening. It was a remarkably fine day when we, on one occasion, set up our rods in the pretty little summer house beside the water. T. took one side of the river; I took the other. "There's a good fish rising." "Ay, and there's another." "I've got him." "So have I;" and we were each engaged in playing our fish simultaneously on opposite sides of the stream. Then T. got another, and then I got one, and so we pulled up four or five brace of nice fish very quickly. It threatened seriously to be a good day, and we were in high spirits. Presently I stopped to light a pipe, and a few pieces of weed came floating by.

"I say, T., doesn't it look to you as if the water was not quite so bright as it was?"

"I was just thinking the same thing," was the answer.

At this moment a considerable scattering of weed came along.

"Never can be weed cutting. They did that a fortnight ago. I took care to ask about that," said T.

"Looks deuced like it, though," grumbled I; "and if so"—I couldn't conclude; the consequence was too awful to contemplate; but T. did.

"If so, it's all U—P, up, adjective, not down, as the worthy Mr. Squeers said."

"Oh, but it never can be; it would be too much. We shall have had over thirty-six miles' drive for nothing;" and that seems an impossibility. But the weeds came down thicker and thicker, the water got dirty, and the fish left off rising.

"Well, now, this is jolly hard luck." Nowadays we should say "awfully" hard luck, but "jolly" was the word then. We had taken it from Mark Tapley. The situation was Tapleyian too. "What's to be done?"

"Done! well, there's nothing for it but to wait till they leave off, which they will do at four or five."

"And then it will be half-past six or seven before the weeds will have done."

"Yes, that's true; it is a horrible bore. Let's walk up stream and see whether we can beer the men off till to-morrow. It isn't likely, I allow; but I'd rather pay a sovereign or two than lose the day. At any rate, we may get them to slip off, promiscuously

like, an hour earlier, and that's something." Accordingly, with our rods over our shoulders, we stalked grimly up stream. About a mile up, we came upon a solitary fisher—an Alexander Selkirk, who was monarch of all he surveyed, but who could not make any use of it, and didn't appear to like the prospect—leaning over a foot-bridge across the stream. His rod reposed gracefully against the hand-rail, and dejection the most profound clouded his expressive visage.

"I should like his face now as a pattern for a good pike-fishing day," said T., as we approached him; "cloudy and squally, eh!" We addressed the disconsolate piscator, and asked him if he knew who was cutting weeds, and where.

"It's that fellow C.," he growled—"the biggest blackguard in—in—in—in the county. He's always at it. He devotes himself to it, sir, for nothing else but to spoil people's sport, sir," turning to us alternately. "He's cut by everybody, sir, and this is his revenge, I suppose." ("Cuts in return, only weeds, whispered T.) "A low fellow, sir—a very low fellow indeed—quite a *parvenoo*, quite—smokes a long clay pipe, and has dreadful low habits."

"But where is his water?"

"Oh, just up above this—about half a mile up or so."

"Let's go up and discourse him, T."

"Not a bit of use, sir," said the knight of the rueful countenance; "he'll only treat you in some low, scurvy sort of way. Better not go near him."

But T. had great belief in what he called "putting it to a fellow" in the right sort of way. So we

decided to proceed and encounter the troubler of the waters, and half a mile up we came upon four men up to their hips in the river, with hoes, &c., hacking away at the mud and weed and shoving it into the stream, while a gentleman, as we walked up, came out of a nice little fishing-house on the banks, with a long clay in his hand, and advanced to meet us.

"He can't be such a rank bad one, T., or he'd never sport his clay in that calm, self-possessed way," I whispered. "However, here goes," and I went up to the gentleman and "put it to him :" "Thirty-six miles' drive—sport utterly destroyed—couldn't he let the men finish the job to-morrow ?" &c., &c.

"Now look here, gentlemen," said he ; "I'll just tell you how this case stands. I am exceedingly sorry to spoil any *gentleman's* sport ; but you saw that fellow down on the bridge below ? Well, now, that fellow, who's a cursed insolent upstart, behaved in the most brutal way to a swan and some decoy ducks of mine. He shot the ducks because they came on his water, without giving me any notice that they annoyed him. The ducks cost me a lot of money too ; and then he and his man hammered my swan with sticks, broke his wing, and nearly killed him. If he had complained to me about them, I'd have managed to keep them away ; but, confound him, it was too bad altogether. And the messages he sent me when I complained were not fit to send a costermonger, by Jove, sir. He rents that water, and pays a stiffish rent for it too ; but, you mark me, he shall never have a day's fishing on it as long as he rents it,

for his brutality. I always find out when he is down, and I always cut my weeds then, d'ye see, and he stands on the bridge all day and swears. It's quite refreshing to hear him, I am told."

"Well, but you not only spoil his sport, but ours as well ; and it's hard lines on us, you'll allow, to drive thirty-six miles for nothing, and to be punished for other folks' quarrels."

"Don't be uneasy about that," quoth the "biggest blackguard in the county." "You see my water from here up through the next two fields, above where the men are weeding. Well, now you just go and fish that as much as you like. There are three fish in my waters for one in B.'s, where you have come from ; and when you are tired, go into my little fishing box there, and in the locker you'll find some capital Bass and a bottle of old sherry, with clean pipes and the best of bird's-eye. In the evening, after the cutting is done, you can, if you grow tired of this, go down again and finish off on B.'s water, and in that way you'll get double the sport you otherwise would. And look here, I'm no fishermen myself—don't care about it ; but whenever you come over to the Chess to fish, you are both as welcome as the flowers in May to come and take a turn over my water for a change. I must leave you now, but you'll find everything you require in the locker when you want 'em ; only lock the place up and give one of the men the key before you go."

"'Pon my honour, I think this man's the most astonishing and unheard-of 'blackguard' I have come across in the whole course of my life ! " quoth T. We

laughed over his plan of paying off his foe below—it was so unique and so effective—and we voted him a capital friend, but a deuced bad enemy.

His fishing was excellent, and so were his Bass and his sherry, for we made a big hole in both, as the weather was warm. The Mayfly happened just to be coming up; if not for the first time, still the fish were hardly up to it; but as the day went on they took it nobly. We had some fair imitations, and they took them well, and when we finished the last glass of sherry and locked up the fishing box, our baskets, though no small ones, were packed so that we could hardly squeeze the lids down. When we got down to B.'s we had a fine evening before us; we emptied our creels, and the fish were in grand humour after their enforced fast all day, so that we pretty nearly filled our creels again before we left off. I never knew how many we scored by braces—we failed to count them—but I know that T., the keeper, and myself had as much as we could comfortably carry back to our inn at night, and that was over 100lb. weight.

I am sorry to say that our friend died some two or three years after, and the water passed into other hands, and still again into others. All the owners have been very liberal to me in giving leave, and I have fished the water many times since, but never dittoed the day I then had by a long, long way. What pleasant hours I have spent under the broad sycamore by the keeper's house, or musing over the very bridge where we saw our disconsolate friend wearing weeds for his misdoing, wondering how I could best circumvent that old two-pounder who

always kept rising in the nick in the bush just below, but who always ceased the moment an artificial fly came within sight, no matter how neatly put over him. But ah, that *was* a day! I wish all my weed-cutting days turned out as satisfactorily.

SAM COVENTRY.

“Not so black as he’s painted.”—*Old Proverb.*

NEXT to Will Whistle, even if he did not to some extent take precedence of him in point of being generally known in our district, was Sam Coventry—“Slippery Sam” some of his intimates called him, and not quite without reason. He lived at a little four-roomed cottage near the bridge, called “The Bunk,” and, though small, it was one of the most snug and comfortable little cribs in the place. For Sam was a genius at contrivance, and liked comfort when he could get it. A very accomplished fellow was Sam. There was hardly anything he could not do. He was a very skilful artist—his father *was* an artist—and I am sure, if he had stuck to it, he would have made a very good living at working in terra cotta. I have seen him take a bit of chalk or a lump of clay, and, with only a penknife, he would in ten minutes carve out a caricature of some mutual friend’s face, which was inimitable in its humorous grotesqueness. As a musician, though almost entirely self-taught, he could make the violin do anything; and as for the piano, I have heard him sit down and play an air he had just picked up, modulating it from key into key, twisting

it and turning it about in all manner of strange and original variations, until one could hardly believe he had ever been used to do anything else. He had a fine baritone voice and an endless *répertoire* of songs, many of them old, quaint, and curious ; and in those days, when the institution called a “ free and easy ” was far more general than it is now, there was not one, far or near, that Sam was not besought to take the chair at. And with all this he was a first-rate actor. A story is told that he once found himself in Brussels in a state of complete impecuniosity—a by no means unusual occurrence with Sam, but he never seemed to mind it ; and, after turning over in his thoughts various methods of financing which occurred to him in rotation, he brushed up his hat, pulled on a pair of light-coloured kids, got himself up generally within an inch of his life, and betook him to the theatre. “ Putting on no end of side,” as he described it, he made his way to the manager.

“ What should you say, sir, if a foreigner of distinction—ah ! of distinction, yes,—were willing to play Shakespeare to your audience for a few nights ? ” At first the manager did not seem inclined to say much, but Sam was not to be denied. “ I was hard up, you know, my dear boy, and I was bound to hole him, and I did ; doubled him in off the spot before he knew where he was. Played Shylock the first night ; brought the house down. Took half the receipts for a week ; house crammed, sir ; and left for home with a clear two hundred in my pocket. Met a fellow aboard the boat—deuced clever chap too. Thought *I* knew a thing or two ; played him at piquet

all the way across. Landed at Southampton with three half-crowns in my pocket. Looked in at Stockbridge on the way, and backed Sealskin for a place with dear Alfred ; and here I am, home again, with just the sum that Soapy Sponge dropped at cribbage, viz., ‘ sivin pun’ ten.’ ” That was Sam all over.

Sam once received the honour of being asked to play Iago to the Hon. De Courcy’s Othello at Minever Castle, and, as his young friend Lord Arthur Minever said, “Othello wasn’t in it.” He subsequently played Romeo to Lady Vi Minever’s Juliet, and the only fault in the performance, as Lord Arthur put it to Sam, was that “it was a doosed deal too real ; and look here, Sam, you’re a good fellow and a clever fellow, but there ain’t room for Vi at the Bunk you know. I put it to you now, is there ?”—a fact which Sam frankly admitted, though I always fancied there was a change in Sam after that.

Sam was a first-rate shot too, either in the field or at the trap. He shot many matches, and, though he did not invariably win his match, he rarely failed to win his money somehow. He was, without exception, the biggest poacher in the county ; he had not an acre of shooting of his own, but he managed to shoot somewhere every day in the season, with or without the owner’s permission. Yet somehow he rarely got caught. For one thing, like the poacher in the song,

He could run and jump, my boys,
Ay, over anywhere,

and keepers did not always care to see him, and more than one or two would look another way if they had

the faintest suspicion that Sam Coventry was taking a walk anywhere near their bounds ; for Sam not unfrequently knew more of their private affairs than they would have cared for the public to know. It is not every keeper that is immaculate, and Sam had a large acquaintance among the class who made no brag of their immaculateness. Here is an instance.

There was a Mr. Sankey, a well-known man in the City, who had a very nice shooting at a place we will call Popshot. He had a keeper named Whiffles, an acquaintance of Sam's. When Sankey was not expected down, Whiffles and Sam used to have a very nice little performance there. It so happened that one day Sankey went into a game dealer's in the City, where he was well known, to buy a couple of rabbits, rabbits being somehow unusually scarce at his place.

"I am afraid, Mr. S., I haven't got any just at this moment to suit you," said the dealer ; "but, if you'll wait a minute or two, there's a hamper just come in which I haven't unpacked yet, and there may be some in that." The hamper was opened ; it was full of miscellaneous game — pheasants, hares, rabbits and partridges. "Ah, yes, these will just do," quoth the dealer, hauling out three or four couple.

"If it's a fair question, now, where do those come from ?" asked S., half carelessly.

"Oh, let's see ! place called 'Popshot,' sent by 'J. Whiffles.'"

"Really," said Sankey, in the most calm, unconcerned way. "Get much from that quarter ?"

" Well, pretty well. Get a hamper most weeks."

The delighted Sankey ran down unexpectedly to Popshot, dropped upon Whiffles, and prosecuted, and got him three months. As for Sam, "he always thought that Whiffles would make a mess of it some day ; told him so often ; but he wouldn't listen to reason. Obstinate chap, Whiffles."

Sam himself was neatly caught once. He had a very pretty little cottage, with a right of fishing attached to it on the "Reedy." He let the cottage and fishing to a Mr. Gammon, a gentleman fond of sport, but not much of a fisherman, though partial to watching the trout as he walked the banks, and mused on distances, weights, handicaps, and such things. One day, while he was walking along the bank, he fancied that he missed two or three exceptionally fine fish which he had been wont to notice rising in a certain rapid. What had become of them ? He could see nothing of them above or below. The next day he seemed to think there were other fish missing, and the stock apparently decreased rapidly. He could not make it out. How could it be ? It puzzled him. He thought it over. That evening, just before bedtime, it being a brilliant moonlight night, he walked out of the front door, and so stood smoking the last of a capital cigar over the wicket gate, just for a breath of air before turning into bed, and he took a glance up and down the river, which lay about eighty yards or so off down through the middle of the field, and the edge of the near bank was somewhat clearly defined in the moonlight, the bank being some four or five feet above the stream

just there. While looking across the field, Mr. G. saw something about the size of a rabbit or hare bob up above the bank, and down again. "Rabbit! Nonsense; no rabbits there. There it is again! What the dickens can it be?" Throwing away the stump of his cigar, Mr. G. advanced very cautiously towards the spot, under shadow of a low cross fence, to satisfy his curiosity; and, as he got within about ten yards or so of the bank, he heard a voice, in a loud whisper, say, "What's the matter?" and another voice answer similarly, "D— her! she's hung up;" and, advancing quickly to the spot, he found his friend Sam and Whiffles up to their waists in the stream, with a net fixed in a stump, and a bag, with sundry fine trout in it, which they left behind in their sudden departure. Gammon was a man of resource, and he notified to Sam that, if he ventured to call for his quarter's rent, he would serve him with a summons for poaching. "Egad, sir," said Sam, who used to tell the story himself, with great glee; "he scored off me, did Gammy. Fifteen pound for a dish of trout, you know—it was dear, very! I had him afterwards, though, to rights, in that pigeon match with Alfred. Put him on nothing to a score, and won. It didn't pay, though, in the long run. Gam's a bad one to peg with; for he's so all over the shop that you never know what drawer you'll find him in."

I suppose in the whole county you would not find anyone endowed with a tenth of the cheek which Sam was gifted with. Talk of what the pig was killed for! as Will used to say, "It was lucky for Sam his parients

were not of the pig-headed persuasion ; ” and the cool way in which he would work himself out of a difficulty, which most men would flounder in, was perfectly marvellous. I have heard him, when caught trespassing on another man’s ground, talk to the proprietor, or shooting tenant, in such a way that he hardly knew whether the land was his or Sam’s. I have known him warn a man off his own ground. He walked straight up to him (the gentleman had only lately taken the shooting), and said, most politely, “ Of course, sir, you are not aware that you are trespassing. I am quite willing to suppose, sir, that, as a new-comer, you don’t really know the bounds ; and, though I must ask you not to trespass in future, yet, of course, as you are here now, pray finish the beat out, by all means—pray do ; and, if you will come and take a shot at this covey here ” (the stranger’s dog was pointing) “ with me, I shall be delighted.” And Sam led the stranger gaily down to his own birds, killed a brace, and bagged them. The stranger killed one, and was about offering it to Sam. “ No, pray keep it, pray do ; ” and so Sam walked him over four or five good fields of his own shooting, bagged three or four brace of birds, pointed out his bounds, as they weren’t, in the most cheerful, condescending way, asked him to drop in at his cottage, and take liquor, &c., and left him delighted with his (Sam’s) kindness and agreeable manner. “ Can’t summons me,” said Sam, in the billiard room in the evening ; “ went along with me, don’t you know—never warned me off, but showed the way, for I made him go first—*particeps criminis*—condoned the offence, d’ye see ?—

not a bad fellow, either. I think I shall cultivate him." And Sam did, and had more than birds out of him in the future. The first time he saw him, he explained it all away as a mistake, owing to a difference of opinion between two unfriendly proprietors, &c., and Sam had such a way with him that he managed to solder the thing up, and actually "sold him Carlo" before the evening was out. This was a standing joke.

There was a dog which came about the place somehow and took up his quarters with Sam; he was a very good-looking pointer, but awfully belied his looks, for a more infamous, abandoned quadruped than Carlo was not to be found this side of Whitechapel. It is a bad thing to say of a human being that he would rob a church; but you might truthfully say of Carlo, if it would deepen his criminality, that he would much prefer to rob a church to any other place. In the village he was the chief of the dangerous classes; in the field, to say he was not worth a rap was to say nothing, for he was a deal worse than that. Of course, no one who knew him would have owned Carlo for a moment, but strangers very often owned him for a day or two. As sure as one came into the place, the farce of "selling him Carlo" would, sooner or later, be gone through; and it was a smartish fellow, mind, who avoided becoming the owner of Carlo. We had all had him, more or less, and Sam owned to having sold him twenty-nine times for various sums, from 3*l.* to 10*l.* No one ever kept him a week. Even Sam was obliged to sell him, or lend him, or get him into the next county and lose him for a time, every now

and then. It used to be quite a field day with us, and conversations of this sort would take place, when a new man came : "Who's that?" "Oh, a Mr. Smith ; he's staying at the White Hart for the hunting." "Sam sold him Carlo yet?" "No, no ; but I should say that it will be coming off about to-morrow night." "All right; I'll look in." And when Sam paused in his game of billiards and said to the stranger, "Talking of dogs," we were all prepared to assist in the performance, and to help the sale of Carlo to our utmost ; and when that trial came off next day, in Giles's turnips, there was always a good muster to see it ; for this canter to find a covey in the turnips was about the only thing Carlo would do in the way of sport for anyone ; he would do it for Sam alone, and only just once for him. He knew that it heralded a new place, with improved grub, and any amount of chances for thieving and general fiendishness ; and, in fact, he seemed to know the whole box of tricks, and to enjoy it as much as anyone. Accordingly, the new man bought Carlo, who, on the very first day, ran up no end of coveys for him, chased a wounded hare, caught it, ran away and hid it, stole half a cold goose and buried it, killed three valuable young ducks, howled unceasingly when not otherwise occupied, bit the man who tried to stop him, and finally was shot at by the infuriated proprietor, being detected in killing the missus's old favourite poodle, having previously mangled the Persian kitten. This indignity he resented by running away and careering the country in a promiscuous tour of spoliation and plunder ; and stories of what "that ere Carlo did," and what "this

here Carlo goes and does," while on his travels, were the talk of all the farmers round, he being far better known than trusted in the district. But Carlo was not a dog to lose, and at the end of three days Sam found him in his own kennel. Sam sent up to say he had returned, and should his man bring him up? The answer was that he had better not, because the big bulldog was loose, and he did not take kindly to strangers.

But I am leaving Sam and his qualities sadly behind. Instances of his assurance were by no means rare or wanting. Another time, in another county, where he was not known, he walked on to a gentleman's fishery and fished away freely, as if it was all his own. The keeper came up and ordered him off. Sam threatened to throw him into the river if he was not off himself. The keeper got wroth, and began to talk loud and use "prave 'orts," and big ones too. In the middle of it, when the keeper's chance of a ducking was getting imminent, down came the master. Coming from behind the keeper, the keeper did not see him. Sam did, and as he came in earshot, Sam especially exasperated the man by some allusion to his dress or person, and the keeper let out a "big D" or two. Sam stepped up to the master, now not a dozen yards off, and took off his hat with profuse politeness.

"Mr. G. G., I believe? Stand on one side, my friend" (as the keeper was pushing forward to prefer his complaint) : "as I have already told you, you are too impetuous, and much too abusive and coarse. Sir, I regret to find that I have trespassed most unwittingly on your stream. I am the last person in

the world who would take such a liberty if I knew it. Pray accept my most earnest apology. I should, indeed, have written to you to that effect. Now, sir, this person—your keeper I presume—you wish to do his duty properly and decently—firmly, of course, but temperately. But I am sure, sir, that it is not your wish that gentlemen accidentally stepping over a gap, as it were, should be treated as though they were criminals of the lowest class, and abused in language such as no costermonger, sir, in the lowest London slum, would adopt. You heard the man's language as you came up.” Here the unfortunate keeper bounced forward, and began disputing in a very loud voice. “ You see for yourself,” said Sam, “ the state he is in.”

“ Yes, certainly,” said the proprietor, “ very excited, very. Tomkins, hold your tongue, sir! stand back !”

“ Personally,” said Sam, “ I don't really mind such things; but I think for your own credit, my dear sir, that you should recommend your man to adopt a more fit and proper mode of address to gentlemen, whereas his language has been frightful—frightful !”

“ Certainly, most certainly,” said the proprietor. “ It is most improper, most disgraceful. I'll—I'll discharge him, most certainly I will.” Here Tomkins burst out again. “ Hold your tongue, sir ! ” said his master; “ how dare you ? ” Then Sam, in the most high-falutin style, apologised for trespassing, and said he would leave instantly “ if Mr. G. would be so very kind as to point out his boundary.” Mr. G. begged he wouldn't think of doing so; hoped he would

excuse the rough way he had been treated, and would finish his sport; and with many compliments they parted.

"There, you son of a sea cook, now, what d'ye think of that?" said Sam to the extinguished keeper, who clearly knew not what to make of it. "Now, if you don't come and show me where all the best fish are, I won't ask the governor to keep you on." "Nothing like bounce," as Sam remarked; never let anyone begin at you."

Somehow, however, scamp as he undoubtedly was, and loose fish to the last degree, almost everybody liked Sam. He would pick you up at any moment; you were not safe with him for an hour, unless you had come badly to grief, and then there was not a soul in the place who would do for you what Sam would. "Sit up and nurse a sick friend!" Why, I have known him sit up and nurse a sick child, and be as tender as a woman over it! and to a hard-up friend his purse was as free as air. There was not a woman in the parish but would have trusted Sam, High or low, it made no difference; and more than one ladye of high degree would have "come" had Sam but whistled, in spite of "father and mither and a'," once upon a time, in days not long past.

It was a curious thing how Sam lived; he had a small patrimony, and he managed somehow to keep it, although constantly hard up. As to swopping and dealing like Will Whistle, to deal with Sam was to be done as brown as mahogany; he could not help it, and what is more, he would not try to; as he said, "he couldn't see the immorality of robbery." That

"those should take who had the power and those should keep who can" was eminently his doctrine, and he supported it once to me, during a long Trichinopoly cheroot, by very able arguments. He didn't quite convert me, but he borrowed 5*l.* of me, which I still live in hopes of seeing some day. For, oddly enough, I have faith in Sam. Yes, in spite of everything, rogue as he is, I have faith in Sam. And what's more, Sam knows it.

There must have been Arab blood somewhere in Sam. His ancestor must have been the Scheik who wept because his guest had eaten his salt, and therefore he could not rob him. Had he lived five hundred years or so ago, he would certainly have been a popular outlaw—a sort of Robin Hood. Certainly, for one thing, if there was any fighting to be done, Sam never would have been found at all backward—not a bit of it. He was a biggish, square, well-put-together fellow; very muscular, and always at work, and a very favourite pupil of Johnny Walker's. Indeed, that great professor always said he was too good for an amateur. I remember a row at Stockbridge races once which little Lord Arthur Minever got into. He was rather small and weakly, though as brave as a little lion, grit to the backbone. He won a bet of some welshing scamp, and tackled him for the money. The fellow repudiated and tried bounce, and, having a lot of his friends around, they began hustling and bonneting "the swell," and they were proceeding to rougher treatment. Indeed, a large scoundrel called "Big Burdon," the bully of his class, had just doubled his fist, and was making at the little lord—who was

defending himself like a Trojan, and had left a nasty print on one or two eyes—when Sam came through the crowd “like a thousand of bricks,” as his lordship described it, and down went Burdon like a ninepin, with a smack on the jaw that made eating sore travail to him for weeks after. Over went the welsher, “with a nose like a fritter,” to which blowing would be a complicated and circumvolvular operation for some time. The crowd was thick and large, but they fought their way through it like catapults. “How did you manage it, my lord?” asked a friend. “Well,” said his lively lordship, “we’d only one rule, Sam and I—wherever we saw an eye, we hit it. Sam, old fella, you’d do it for a stranger,” said his lordship, squeezing his fist; “and as for me—*she* saw it. Why the doose haven’t you five thousand a year, Sam?”

I think it was about six weeks after Stockbridge that Sam, of all men in the world, had a sale; sold off everything, and realised more hundreds than he at all expected, and left the country. I heard that he went straight out to ’Frisco, and after that I heard that he had made up a party, of which he was captain, and gone to Colorado silver mining—that is about five years ago. I saw Lord Arthur the other day, and, as he was the only person who seemed ever to know anything of Sam, I asked if he knew what he was about.

“Well,” said his lordship, “he’s gone on a rum errand—gone to earn 5000*l.* a year; means to pile up a couple of hundred monkeys or so, and then he means to come home.”

"To earn 100,000*l.*!" said I, in surprise.

"Ay, and what's more, I'm told he's winning fast. I always said there was the right stuff in Sam."

"Well, well; but what is he doing it for?"

"Ah, that's the question. What *is* he doing it for? Getting avaricious in his old age, I s'pose," said his lordship, reflectively. "And the rummest thing is the way he's changed his opinions. You know what an out-and-out Rad he was in point of morals. Well, he's become the most topping, high-dried old Tory imaginable. Man with a couple of hundred monks can't well be anything else, I s'pose."

Lady Vi Minever is still Lady Vi Minever, having refused several very advantageous offers of marriage of late years, preferring, as she said, "to stop at home and keep house for Arthur." A little bird whispered to me the other day, however, that she is going to be married at last, and to my question "When?" the reply was "When Sam comes home."

Who would have thought it? But, as the world looks on 'it, Sam with a couple of hundred monks or so and Conservative principles would be a very different person from Sam with three half-crowns and a rough name in the parish. The fact, however, was that Lady Vi, who has a will of her own, told her brother plainly and decisively that she meant to marry Sam, whether he liked it or no, as soon as he could keep her.

"Done with you, baby," said his lordship. "Sam ain't a Plantagenet perhaps, but he's a doosed good fellow in grain; only he wants a little more ballast.

He must carry another stone or two, and then he'll come in with his hands down; you see if he don't."

As for me, I won't take four pound nineteen and sixpence for that fiver.

PISCATORY PROSINGS.

“Therefore my age is a lusty winter, frosty but kindly.”
As You Like It.

DE OMNIBUS REBUS ET HOMINIBUS.

WHEN I look back to the fishermen I have met, and the odd *contretemps* and pleasant fore-gatherings, dear me ! what a memory it makes ! One day lunching with a nobleman, perhaps, amidst quiet simplicity and good taste, with everything perfect of its kind, but nothing pretentious and nothing bumptious. On another dining on cold bacon or bread and cheese and beer, under a hedge with a tinker ; and here, too, there is neither pretension nor bumptiousness ; the bread and cheese are excellent, and the beer is the best for miles round, and our dining hall is one which human architects cannot parallel. Between these two extremes there is every gradation, and I have tested and plumbed them all. I prefer the extremes, I must say, being a man of extreme views. And amongst the parties at whom smug respectability would “look asklent and unco’ skeigh,” I will call up one or two.

There was my old gossip Shallows. Respectable people would have turned up their noses at Shallows. There never was a man so clean out of society as Shallows. I don’t suppose that the Thompson-Browns

or the Johnson-Smiths, or even the Jones-Robinsons, would have dined at the same table with Shallows to save their lives. Yet Shallow's heart was as true as steel, and in feeling he was a gentleman to the backbone ; and some day, if he isn't there now, Shallows, I'm thinking, will find his way to Abraham's bosom, and Society then in Malebolge will be greatly scandalised, and wonder at Abraham for keeping such company. Shallows was full of faith ; he was the most hopeful creature I ever knew ; and as for charity, it was born and bred in him. When I first knew him he was first comedian, besides general utility man when wanted, at the Theatre Royal, Langport. He was a sort of universal genius, and by no means an indifferent scene painter, with a keen eye for the beauties of nature, and great facility for transferring them to canvas ; and wasn't he fond of fishing ? In his strolling life, he had many a time and oft to rely on his old walking-stick rod and such cunning devices as he was aware of for a dinner or supper, and many a poor comrade, less gifted than himself, would have fared slimly at times but for his foresight ; and now, when better off, he never lost a chance of going fishing if he could help it. I remember one Christmas Eve, when there was nothing doing at the theatre—Shallows had wrought for weeks at the pantomime which was to take the town by storm on Boxing Night—he had an hour or two to spare, and we sat down to a jorum of egg-hot and two long churchwardens, and Shallows meandered off into the experiences of his old strolling life, which he never tired of. “I always had a night line or two, sir, and half

a dozen hooks for eels in my bundle, and a sniggling needle and string in my old *omnium-gatherum* book, and many a time have I, when passing a pond as we went into a village, dug up a worm or two from an adjacent dirt-heap and pitched in my ‘breakfast winner;’ and, my word ! wasn’t it a triumph, Master Brooke, to haul out a two-pound eel at four o’clock next morning ! How one enjoyed it ! ah ! And, mind you, a pipe of tobacco in the clear morning air at that time isn’t half bad neither, when you know you’ve got your breakfast in your pocket, look you. And sometimes, you know, you’d tumble across some kind soul just milking the cows ; and, my faith, didn’t a beaker of foaming fresh milk, warm from the cow, go down with a relish, eh ! A stroller’s life, though it was a hard one—and sometimes a right down hard one—a twister, mind you—yet what a lot one sees of life, and what a heap one remembers ! And, hard up as one often was when there was no treasury, sir, and no tick at the butcher’s, yet, somehow, with a little mother wit to know how to come at the best side of it, there’s a lot of good in human nature, and a lot of kind folks in the world. And then the Sundays, too, when there was a good stream or pond handy where one could fish ; if the weather was fine and warm, and coppers would run to a chunk of bread and cheese and a bottle of beer, what more did you want ? And as to wicked—don’t tell me, sir ! ” continued Shallows, “ I don’t believe that Jacob ever prayed more heartily or thoroughly in the fields than I did. I doubt if he was half as thankful for having turned his potage to so good account as I was for having turned mine to

next to no account at all. And then, too, what rum folks one used to meet, and what sport one had sometimes! I remember one Sunday morning I got, by pure accident—I never meant to go there, for I'm no poacher; I scorn it, sir; no—but I got, by pure accident, on the land of an old squire down at S.—Squire W. He was a most eccentric man, lived a very solitary, melancholy life; a crusty, obnoxious, unsympathetic old Pagan—so the world said; and of course the world is always right. Well, I got on his land by accident, quite by accident. There *was* a bit of open water below; but, not knowing the bounds, I went over 'em, and, finding a very snug berth under a pollard, I came to anchor, put out the tools, and began to pull them out. Such roach! regular labbers, pounders, every one of 'em! ‘Shallows, my friend,’ says I, ‘you’ve nicked it for once; and if you ain’t in about the tallest and lushest clover you’ve been in this some time, I’m a Dutchman.’

“I hadn’t been there half an hour, sir, when a growl from behind me startled me. ‘Hallo, you sir! Who are you?—what do you do here?’

“I looked round—I was playing a pounder at that moment—‘the rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast’ stood before, or rather behind, me; and there was a tall, fierce-eyed, wild-haired old gent, of sixty or thereaway, with a portentous cudgel in fisto, sir, frowning at me like a wicked baron, as who should say, ‘Away with him to the deepest dungeon beneath the castel moat—a!—there let r-r-rats gun-naw his bones!’ He was a tartar to look at. By Jove, sir, he’d have made his fortune at the Coburg as the

Tyrant of Taganrog, without a touch of paint. Though alarmed of course, I never lost my presence of mind, sir, for ‘A fish is a fish, be it never so scaly; We get ‘em at times and we long for ‘em daily.’ Hem! Dr. Watts, I think. Here’s Watts’s health on suspicion. Accordingly I—ah!—I landed my fish carefully, and then got up.

“‘Sir,’ I said, ‘if I am trespassing, I beseech you pardon me—I was not aware of it. I would not intrude sir, on another’s rights, not for an instant, to save me from starvation. I am a poor actor, sir, fishing for his dinner, which is like to be scant enough if the stream here does not furnish it.’ I then paused.

“‘And aren’t you ashamed, sir, to be fishing on a Sunday?’

“‘Sir,’ said I, ‘I *am* ashamed—very much ashamed—of that society which, not recognising my merits, nor the needs begot by Nature in this *corpore vilo*, leaves me no choice in the matter.’ That fetched him, d’ye see.

“‘What’s your name, eh?’

“I told him, thinking to myself, ‘That’s a summons for poor me to-morrow.’ Well—Heaven help us all! it’s a hard world at times; but I never was more deceived in my life. ‘Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes!’ I offered him the fish; he never even so much as looked at ‘em. I offered to leave the spot at once; but he only repeated to himself, ‘A poor actor, eh?—fishing for his dinner. Hah!’ I couldn’t catch clearly what he said, but I made it out afterwards: ‘There was One once who didn’t forbid poor fishermen to pluck the ears of corn on a Sabbath

—why should I?’ And he turned away gently, and slowly walked off.

“I didn’t know what to make of it; but shortly afterwards a servant came along the bank with a basket in his hand, nodded to me, pointed to the basket, put it down, said nothing, and walked away. I took it up, and removed the napkin that covered the contents. By George, sir, there was about the finest and plumpest roast fowl you ever saw in your life, and a bottle of such sherry as the Lord Mayor, sir, couldn’t equal; and at the bottom of the basket Mr. W.’s card, and written on it, ‘Mr. Shallows has permission to fish in my water whenever he comes into this neighbourhood.’ I give you my word, sir, that the kindly delicacy and Christian charity of the action had that effect that I couldn’t see the top of my float for half an hour after—it was always *under water*, so to speak. Swells of high degree would have given their ears for that privilege; but they never got it, sir, never got it. He was a good soul, a kind soul; suffered a grief in early life. The old story, sir—the old, old story—fair and false, friendship and fallacy, and then misanthropy; to wit, a kindly nature soured, but still with secret drops of honey at the bottom. Heaven help him, poor fellow !

Blow, blow, thou winter’s wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man’s ingratitude—

Or woman’s, mayhap, which is worse—which is worse—since ’tis closer to your bosom. Ay, ay ! Your health, sir ! That’s fine tobacco; it’s very fine tobacco, but pungent when it gets betwixt the eyelids.

By the way, did you come across Phil Barber when you were on the Nottingham circuit? A keen hand, Phil, a very keen hand, but a bit of a poacher too, sir. Ay? Won't do, won't do, sir—it'll never do—not if you mean it," he added as a saving commentary on the tale he had told.

Shallows afterwards came to London, where he made a hit, left the stage for a scene painter's studio, and that in turn for an artist's. Many a chat and glass and pipe I had with him in the cosy old pub hard by the T. R. Langport. A wide and keen knowledge of life had left him simple, kindly, and full of faith in his fellow-men. Would we could all say as much!

Then there was Charley Costigan. Good gracious! What would Society have said of him? He—I mention it in a whisper, mind—he played the piano at the Cave of Harmony, Popolorum Piazza, Green-street; and what a strange, ungainly, good, simple creature it was! How he would enjoy that long, long Sunday (all too short for him, though) banking it along the Thames or Lea; and with what glee he would display to me between the calls—when the favourite old glee of "Down in a flowery vale" had been performed, and we were waiting until "Mr. Fastman, gentlemen, would oblige the company with an improvisatorial extravaganza," or "Herr von Shoful would give his imitation of pigs in a pound and other living creatures"—how he would lug out the old flag basket and display the ten roach, headed by the noble half-pounder which formed the pride of his take, and saying with a slight stutter "W-wasn't the

old lady gu-lad, my boy!" He kept his mother, and like a good son loved and honoured her. "She *can* cook 'em too, make no error. Come and have a cup of tea with me out at Camberwell one Sunday, and you shall see. The place is humble, sir, but it's clean, and so far as a cup of tea and watercresses and a dish of fried fish goes, and a glass of grog and a clean pipe after, you're welcome. Now do come, and I'll show you my tackle, and we'll have such a talk—a long talk—of fishing!"

"Your attention, gentlemen, to Mr. Flat, if you please. Mr. Flat for the Lively Flea gentlemen;" and whack went the hammer, And Charley had to return to his duties. I need hardly say I went, and spent a very pleasant evening. The "old lady" was worthy of his love, for she adored Charley, and their intercourse was inexpressibly touching. A day on a preserved water was the height of Charley's ambition; and I once got him one at Asterly Park, where he caught roach and perch by the dozen, and one carp of four pounds weight—an achievement equivalent to the storming of Porto Bello in Charley's eyes. It was the greatest day of his existence, I verily believe, and he never ceased to talk of it. The carp was stuffed, of course, by a friendly barber, and it graces Charley's parlour, hideously distorted, but I wouldn't say so for the world.

"Wot I like about 'untin', my lord, is, as it brings people together as wouldn't otherwise meet," the little snob said to the earl by his own covert-side; and what I like about fishing is the common bond of

union which, properly appreciated, it extends among all classes; and one meets with anglers and makes friends with them in all sorts of odd ways—and what cheery, kindly fellows many of them are! On the other hand, there are men who go fishing whom one would rather not meet more than once. Many times, I regret to say, I have met with the jealous angler—the man who can't bear to be beaten, who likes always to be at the head of the poll, and who suffers agonies if he thinks his companion has a bigger salmon or a brace more of trout than he has. If he is fishing a stream or pool, and sees you coming up along the bank to some favourite cast between you, how he will scurry over the cast he is fishing, to hurry on to the next before you can get to it! I remember a man of this kind, Sir Charles —, whom I sold a bargain once. I caught him doing a tricky thing in flies a few days previously. I was then on the D—. I went out one morning to fish a pool called "the Flat," on the tail of which I had raised a good fish two days before. As we walked along the road, said Sandy Grant, my gillie, "Yon's Sir Charles fishin' the Flat, your honour. I'm thinking our chance is joost oot," said Sandy. I said a naughty word, and was going to retreat, when a thought occurred. "Is he fishing the upper or lower part?" "Just the upper as yet." "Then we have a chance. We'll go back down below and come up along the bank, as if we were making for Pool Gorven" (the next pool to it), "which is rather a favourite cast of Sir Charles's. As soon as he sees us making for Gorven, it's an even bet he scampers to tail of the

Flat, and cuts on to collar Gorven before we can reach it and then——”

Sandy opened his mouth in one of those quiet laughs that the northern Celt often affects, “Weel, I’m no sayin’ that that’s verra unlikely, too.” We did so, and as I said, as soon as we hove in sight down below, Sir Charles, who was fishing the cast leisurely step by step, began to take two steps, and then three, between each cast, and (as we made great *apparent* exertion to get up) at last Sir Charles, after a few more hasty, hurried whips, put his rod over his shoulder and hastened down to Pool Gorven, which he reached, of course, two minutes before us. I “smole sarkastically” as I asked “What sport?” to which he only vouchsafed a sulky monosyllable in reply. I passed on to the Flats, gave it ten minutes’ rest, and then fished it down carefully, and by the time Sir Charles was half-way down Pool Gorven I was fast in my old friend; he showed splendid sport, and scaled 19½lb. Sir Charles was so disgusted that he cut away from Gorven before he had half fished it, and on the tail of it, after a rest, I killed another eleven-pounder. I believe after that the noble B. used to call me to his intimates—he hadn’t many—“that — newspaper fella, by gad;” and if it pleased him, it didn’t hurt me.

I hate an envious or jealous fisherman. I met a fellow once, who, because I beat him rather badly with a certain fly, stole all my stock of them out of my book after I went to bed. No doubt he thought he would use them next day, and turn the tables; but I stuck to him so closely that he hadn’t a chance, and they were of no use to him. He read me a lesson, and

I have always had a lock on my basket ever since. I have known men, who would give you a day's fishing, and who would send a keeper to whip over the whole of the water you were to fish before you got there, keeping for themselves the best of the water, and, of course, quite undisturbed. I once came on such a one, and I am happy to say, that, though he did all he could to disturb the water, and fished his own with fly, minnow, and worm, I beat him consumedly. The little iron blue happened to come up about eleven. The keeper's visit did no harm at all, for the fish had not been on the move previously. The iron blue is a favourite fly of mine, and when the trout are well at the iron blue they mostly decline other favours. I had some choice iron blues; my friend hadn't; and I made a slaughter of leviathans, at which my friend *appeared* delighted. Had he condescended to ask for a fly or two, he would have been as welcome as the flowers in May, but he was too proud. He quarrelled with the man he rented the water of when he left, and, years afterwards, I happened to go there, and heard how he had served me—or rather, tried to. I needn't say I sniggered a bit.

One meets wonderfully knowing chaps, too, sometimes—fellows who know all about everything and everybody. I met an individual once at B—— who was very disputatious. Friend S. and myself were having our tea in the coffee-room; this gentleman laid down the law like a judge. I very seldom dispute with strangers on fishing topics, knowing little about them; I like to listen—one often hears something to advantage. I ventured, however, very gently on this

occasion to insinuate a doubt of his premiss. But, bless you, he knew all about it ; his friend Buckland and Francis Francis both said, &c. Why, Francis had told him only the last time he met him, “ My dear boy,” says he, and so on.

“ Oh, you know Mr. Francis Francis,” said I, rather amused.

“ Know him ! should think I did, rather ! ”

“ Indeed, ha ! I think I met him once—man about my height, and same-coloured hair, isn’t he ! ”

“ Well, no ; he’s a taller man than you, and his hair is lighter.”

“ Really, indeed ; I shouldn’t have thought it.”

After this, conversation languished ; for I was floored—feeling rather like Hodge, who didn’t know whether he had lost a team of horses or found a cart, doubtful of my own identity. I got up to go out of the room, just as the landlord entered, leaving S. behind. “ Who’s that gentleman just gone out, landlord ? ” asked our controversial friend. “ That, sir, that’s Mr. Francis Francis, of the *Field*. ” There was a little titter, after which he got up and went out too, and he didn’t come back again ; and when he sees this in print, as no doubt he will, if he is living yet, he will forgive me for not asking the landlord his name, as I might have done had I been ill-natured.

“ Angler’s weight ” is, unfortunately, a received phrase, and is supposed to express the *x y z* in the piscatorial algebra, and I really am afraid that “ guess weight ” has a drachm or two the advantage of avoirdupois. I have seen “ a pounder ” reduced to nine ounces by the inexorable scales, and, similarly, “ one-and-twenty

pounds have sunk to twelve,'" This kind of exaggeration sometimes has its inconveniences. A friend of mine once, in Wales, was sitting in a smoke room, when one of the party, talking of his take at some place, said, "I got three-and-twenty fish there that averaged 2lb. each." "Now," said my friend, when telling the story, with a profoundly injured and deprecatory air, "*you* know what Welsh trout are at the very best. It was too bad, you know. So I looked across the table to him, and I said, 'It's a lie, Sir !' Of course there was a row ; that is, there was a noise. He was mighty indignant. 'Now stop a bit,' says I ; 'If I'm wrong, I'll apologise humbly—but look here. You say you caught twenty-three fish that weighed 2lb. Did you weigh them carefully in the scales ? If so, where, and who was present ?' 'No, he didn't weigh 'em ; he judged the weight.' 'Very well, then ; how long were they ? No, no ; don't do it in the air in an anything-from-one-foot-to-three way, but mark it on the table.' And I put down my fingers on the table about 15in. or 16in. apart. 'Were they as long as that ?' says I. 'Well, hardly so long as that,' says he. 'Then,' says I, 'they didn't average 2lb. each ; so I'm right so far. Were they as long as that ?' and I shortened it a couple of inches. 'Well, that's a big trout still, and, though some of 'em were biggish trout, the others weren't quite so long,' says he. To shorten the story, I worked him down to about 9in. to 10in. 'Ah !' says I, herring size ; that's just what I expected ; and a very good take, too, for Wales, if they did run that. Now,' says I, 'the fact is this ; since I've been in Wales, I dare say, first and

last, I've been sent some 200 miles or so, here, and there, and everywhere, by the lies and exaggerations which fellows have told me about their fishing, and I was determined that the very next time I heard a fellow lying like that I'd tell him so ; for it's no joke to be sent fifty miles to catch trout of a pound apiece, and to find that it takes ten of 'em to do it." My friend was a very big, square fellow, a bit over 6ft., with a very stern face, and certainly did not look good to eat. So he of the large take took his correction humbly.

"I saw a big fish rising on Cool-na-crack, but I hadn't time to wait for him for the post this morning," says Capt. Corrigan to me as he was coming in to breakfast, and I was going out. "And what did ye kill the 15-pounder on ?" I asked. "Oh, just a green paason."

"Mick," says I, with a wink to my attendant, as we went out, "the captain saw a big fish on Cool-na-crack, but he couldn't stop to fish him, for the post, and he killed his fish on a green parson. See, there's one on his rod now."

"Sure the captain's a cliver man, sir, and a great fisher wid the rake hooks intirely ; but I'll be my oath on the vestments that fly hasn't seen wather, lave alone fishkey at a crissnen' for a week. It's as dry as meself is this mortal momint." Mick came of a dry family, and on all proper occasions I relieved his pain, as I did now, with a nip from the flask. "And sure," continued Mick, wiping his mouth, with a faint cough, "if the captain seen that big fish on Cool-na-crack, he'll have arnt him, and it wouldn't be fair nor dacent

of us to be interferin' wid him, an' him obliged to be runnin' away, too, to de post to write de big bank in Dublin where all de money does be, for lashins of de same ; an' Mrs. Cassidy, dacent woman, where he's lodgin', id like to see the colour ov id, she would. So we'll just go down to the Three Stones and Pandhreen's Hole for politeness, and fish 'em wid a butcher." The captain was allowed to be the biggest liar from —— (a locality indicated by Pope Gregory in the Ingoldsby penance as "where good manners won't let me tell") to Connaught, which, after all, is not so wide a neutral ground (if it is neutral) as some would think ; and when he said a thing you knew that, whatever else might be, that was not.

Cool-na-crack lay above the town, Pandhreen's Hole, &c., below ; consequently, when the captain came suddenly over the high bank upon us later on, as we were playing our second fish, he looked surprised. We didn't, and his man—a lame tailor with an evil eye, who used to get drunk with the captain when they could neither worm, shrimp, snatch, nor gaff a salmon or any other "baste"—audibly cursed us as he retreated over the bank again. The captain was kicked ignominiously out of the Impayrial by the landlord's son for insulting his sister that evening, and the tailor got into the cells, and was fined five shillings in the morning ; and we didn't see either of them on the river again for the rest of the month.

Then there is the poaching fisherman, who would always rather catch one fish unfairly than two fairly. If there is one particular apparatus worse and more diabolical than another, be sure that he has it in

a little tin box somewhere on his person. As for bounds, he regards them rather as objects which it is desirable to get over than otherwise. A friend of mine had some trouble with a parson who would trespass, though his own water was quite as good as my friend's. Four times did he find him whipping a hundred yards and more beyond his limit in one season ; and it was always the same excuse. He was very polite, awfully polite. "Wasn't aware he was trespassing." "Well, you have got cheek," said my friend at last, "If I catch you here again, I'll apply to the bishop, to know if poaching's a part of the Rubric. Good day."

"*Au revoir!*" said the parson ; but he thought better of it, and kept in bounds for the rest of the season.

And so one meets all sorts of persons on the river of life.

CHEWTON PIKE.

"Ah, Master Harry, ye may say what ye wull ; but the big pike never showed in Hartop's Dyke, but what somethin' serious was a-goin' to happen. It's no use, Master Harry—not a mite or mossel. When that 36-pounder was caught there in 1739, that verry day, as chronicles tell us, your hancestor was killed at the stormin' o' Porto Bello."

"My good Peter," said I, "I don't believe in chronicles."

"Not believe in chronicles ?" said Peter in pious horror and amazement. When Betsy Prig expressed her disbelief in Mrs. Harris, it did not cause greater astonishment to Sairey Gamp than did my disbelief in chronicles occasion to old Peter. The foundations of the earth were shaken—nature seemed to be disrupting around him—and he gasped, "Not believe in hactually what took place, and was wrote down at the identical moment by a reverend gent of the period ?" And old Peter's face at my incredulity in the family writings was a sight to see. Why were not the walls of Hartop as the walls of Jericho ?

"No," I replied, "I don't believe in them *as quoted*. I believe that a big fish was caught in that year, and was noted by the reverend chaplain, Master Jeruiah Turntext; and I believe that Captain Hartop was

slain at Porto Bello in the same year, which is not remarkable ; but that they had any connection I don't believe. There is an undoubted haziness in the fixture of the exact date, too, and I don't believe that they happened on the same day at all."

Old Peter shook his head, more in sorrow at my wilfulness than in anger. "And wasn't there a huge pike caught in 1777, when Sir Tiptop Hartop married the Lady of Wootton, and brought all that land into the family ? And that, you *will* allow, was on the very day, for the fish was cooked at the wedding feast.

"Why, you old goose," I replied, "wasn't the dyke dragged on purpose to furnish a big pike for the occasion ?" Peter looked disconcerted for a moment only.

"Still, Master Harry, he *was* there—he was *there* ; that you can't deny.

"Well, and so he is always there, more or less, off and on. It's a place for a big pike, if there's ever one in the river, though you don't perhaps always see him ;" and, as my case was a little weak here, I judiciously, with forensic cleverness, dropped it.

"Then, when the great 39-pounder was caught and Sir Firebrass was attainted, and the great forfeitures befel us ?"

"It is all nonsense, Peter. There have been fifty big pike taken there when nothing happened at all ; and I don't believe that anything is going to happen now. And the big pike may be all a fancy of Tom's after all, and it may be only a middling fish exaggerated by the water or a weed and Tom's

eyesight ; and, even if he *is* a big one, he isn't caught yet."

"Ah well, Master Harry," said Peter as I turned away,

Hartop Dyke and Fenwick's Wyke
Shall meet and join o'er Chewton pike,

though it's three miles away. And it 'll come true yet somehow, you'll see. We'll get our own again, though neither you nor I can see how. We've had the bad luck, and it's our turn to have the good. Fate has planned it, and——" But by the time his maunder was over I was out of hearing.

The fact is, I wasn't much imbued with that implicit faith in the old Hartop legends, oracles, and proverbs—perhaps because I was not brought up in the full flavour of them. For, though as a lad I often visited it, I was not born to the estate, being only a poor cousin of the family. My father was a captain in the navy, and most of my family had been navy men, many of them falling in the battles of their country with honour and reputation ; but if there was any interest among the Hartops, it was monopolised by the elder branch, and our side of the family had reaped honour, but emphatically "barren honour." I had determined on carving out a different career when I had my choice, and I went to the Bar. I had barely eaten my first Term, however, when I had news of the sudden death by drowning of my cousin, young Sidney Hartop, a lad at Eton, and the only son of the Squire of Hartop ; and so affected was the squire at the sad event, that in less than a twelvemonth he followed him, and I most unexpectedly became squire

of Hartop. Now, the Hartops at one time owned large possessions ; all the Fenwick and Chewton lands had belonged to them. But attainders, fines, and a too free system of living had sorely dissipated the property ; when it came to me it was vastly shorn of its fair proportions ; and the burthens on the estate still remaining, necessitated the nursing of the property for at least the next dozen or fifteen years, the income to be derived from it in the meantime being of the smallest. I therefore did not think it worth my while to abandon my profession ; but, with old Peter as major domo to look after the old manor house—a fine old building in the early Elizabethan style—with old Tom Bedell to look after the woods and park, and Lawyer Lipson to act as head nurse, I felt I was in good and trustworthy hands. With an occasional look-up of the old-place, I might follow my own present bent, and live in town and hopes—the shooting and fishing, with about 250*l.* a year, being about all I realised from the property at present. The coverts were good, but, as I could not afford to preserve highly, what game there was was wild ; and if we did not slaughter our pheasants by the hundred, the few we did bag took a very decent amount of slaying, and the sport perhaps was better than it often is in better-stocked places. As for the fishing, there were a few good trout and grayling in the river; and in the dyke—a wide, deep backwater that led out of it—the pike fishing was usually pretty good, and now and then it held very large fish, which were regarded with veneration and superstition, as noted. The stream into and out of the dyke was narrow and rapid,

and joined the river again about sixty or seventy yards outside the park bounds, and of course beyond my domain. The park paling here ran along the side of the road, and the narrow stream ran under a bridge over which the road ran ; and, fifty or sixty yards off, the river itself ran under another bridge. The property on the other side of the road belonged to the Fenwick family, and it was in one of their fields that the dyke stream and the river reunited. I knew nothing of the Fenwicks, except that they had partly, by purchase or other means, come in for the lands which the Hartops had formerly lost or sold ; indeed, I knew little or nothing of any of the families round about, and, until I was in a position to mix with them on equal terms, I did not want to. The Chewton family was a third family, now reduced to one old lady with few relatives, who lived in a doleful old tower on the hillside some three miles up the valley, in front of which stood a tall upright black stone, known as Chewton Pike—to which old Peter's jingle referred, no doubt, though it was far from any point where the Hartop and Fenwick properties could be made to join.

For myself I lived the usual life of a young gentleman reading for the Bar in London. I belonged to a decent club, and went here and there, and, though I worked pretty hard and earned some very useful crumbs by the employment of a tolerably facile pen, I by no means shut myself up. One of my favourite indulgences—a common one to many of my class—was a run down to Brighton from Saturday to Monday. I was well known and well treated at that snug hostelry,

The Pier. It was very handy to the Aquarium, one of the pleasantest lounges I know of. There I used to read the papers, loaf round, and never grow tired of watching and noting the different habits of the various fish, or enjoying the pleasantest and most natural of promenade concerts.

One Saturday I was coming down the steps, when I noticed two ladies standing in front of Bob the bear, who is an institution at the Aquarium, and holds his levées daily. Bob is a great pet of mine, and I generally stop to give him a knob or two of sugar. I had just procured some, when the younger of the two ladies, in throwing him a piece of cake, dropped her glove inside, and Bob, with the curiosity natural to bears, hitched it towards him.

"Oh ! my new glove, auntie ! What a pity !" exclaimed the young lady.

"I will get it," I said, "if you will allow me." And I stepped over the wall, holding the sugar to Bob.

"Oh, pray don't run such a dreadful risk !" she exclaimed, as Bob reared himself up on his hind legs and pawed for the delicacy.

"No risk whatever, I assure you." And as I handed Bob the sugar with one hand I stooped down and picked up the glove with the other, and, leaving Bob to enjoy his coveted sweetie, I turned to restore the glove—whew, what a face ! I was a "gone coon," a lost barrister, from that hour. The bluest of eyes, but with a somewhat frightened look at present ! the most rippling of golden hair, surmounted by a purple velvet hat, with a jungle-cock plume set in a cairngorm

in it! If I had been an artist, I would have spread my soul on canvas to depict that head. Once only again did I see her. That evening I went to the concert, and, coming in between the rows of seats, I happened to seat myself just behind a purple velvet hat, and, as I did so, I heard the sweetest voice my ears had ever taken in, evidently still talking of *the adventure*. "But wasn't it dreadful, auntie, to see that savage beast rear up at him like that? I shall never forget it." "I sincerely hope you will not," I thought, and I moved away softly, and took up an enfilading position, where I could gaze my fill. They went out with the crowd, and I never saw them after, nor could I find out who they were or where they lived, and I lost them.

Time passed on; winter was coming. I determined to go down to Hartop Manor for a day or two's shooting before Christmas. Bob Chatteris was to accompany me, and Lipson promised to come over with his son and join the shoot. I had been engaged in arranging my hospitalities with old Peter when the conversation which opened this story occurred. The next day we had our shoot, and, though we only mustered four guns, yet we managed to put together between seventy and eighty head of all sorts, as also on the day succeeding. The rabbits went to the tenants, as they always did and always will with me; I consider that they are theirs by right of maintenance. The rest of the game, after due regard to housekeeping, I distributed to friends. The next day, which was that before Christmas Day, Bob went over to shoot with Lipson, but returned to dinner, and I

determined to look up that big pike, about which Tom had been to the full as eloquent as Peter. "He be the biggest poike 's ever I see in Hartop Dyke, and I'll stake my affidavy he's as long as that," holding up a spud-handle some four feet and a half long.

"If he is, Tom, then all I can say is that he's a real whopper, and ordinary gimp won't hold him." Fortunately, I happened to have my big salmon rod and reel with me, and, anticipating a big thing if I got hold of this fish, I substituted them for the more delicate pike weapons I usually employed, using two joints of the rod and eschewing the top; and it was as well I did. I then rigged up a live-bait tackle made of mackerel hooks, the only ones I had large or strong enough to suit my notions, and, sliding on a float that would carry a half-pound fish without winking, I set out, followed by Tom with the largest watering-pot full of pretty big baits, dace and roach of nigh on half a pound, and some over.

It was a strange, weird, solitary bit of water, that "dyke." There was not a tree near it, nothing but a straight row of park paling. It had all been a marsh thereabout formerly—centuries since perhaps; peats had been cut there in days when coal was not; possibly this and drainage were the origin of it. The water was dark and gloomy, as the bottom was peat, and towards the dusk of evening, when the fog wreaths settled down on the skeleton reeds, which rattled against the huge spectral bullrushes like empty bones, they often took strange fanciful shapes, and the ghost of Mary Wily, with the infant in her arms, was often supposed to be seen floating among them,

while her screams were heard in the cry of the divers. Mary Wily was a poor, witless creature, who was drowned, or drowned herself and her infant rather, in the dyke some sixty years ago, under very distressing circumstances ; and none of the peasants would go within half a mile of the dyke at even-fall on any account. It was tolerably cheerful, however, on a bright day like the present ; and, as I did not believe in chronicles, I wasn't much affected by ghosts. I had seen plenty of peat lochs and reeds, knew the cry of a “ hawk from a hernshaw,” and both from any expressions from the spirit world ; and as for fog wreaths, I had been lost in them before now, and hated them much too fervently to view them from any supernatural point of view. So I set about my task cheerfully.

The dyke was in places fringed with flags and reeds, but it was pretty clear, as to the surface, from weeds. I commenced near the top, pitching over towards the other side, and working my bait and float slowly in foot by foot towards me. At the third cast the float went down plumb, and in four minutes a ten-pounder was walloping on the green. Then I lost two or three, the baits being too large ; then I got a 12lb. fish ; then some more losses, and a nine-pounder, which had been worried by some “ real big one,” and had slits in him an inch deep and two or three long.

“ That's the gurt 'un for a suffering,” said Tom, sententiously ; and I allowed that it must have been a “ gurt 'un ” indeed that did it. And so, with varying sport, I worked my way down for three or four hundred yards, which brought me to the middle of

the dyke or a little beyond. "Now, sir, it was jist beyond that pen-stock as I see the gurt 'un," indicated Tom. I took off the bait I had on, put on the largest I could find, and walked at once down to the place. There was some deep water about this pen-stock, and I pitched my apparatus right into the middle of it, with a considerable splash. As I did so there was a huge swirl in a big bunch of dead flags, close to the bank on my right, as if a hippopotamus had made tracks from it, and a great cloud of mud welled up all around. The next moment—I never knew how it happened—my float was tearing away, forty miles an hour, down the very middle of the dyke, my big salmon rod bending double, and the reel screeching like a frightened jay. After the first rush of sixty or seventy yards he stopped for a moment and sulked, then gave a huge flounder and flounce on the surface, shaking his great head vigorously, and displaying a pair of jaws and a gape which would be a nightmare to most jack fishers. But the rush and the pulling had done me the good service of burying two or three of the big hooks safely; so he set off again for another sixty or seventy yards, and repeated the manœuvre. Then he tried a little bit of round-about tactics, looking everywhere for weed beds or stakes; but fortunately there were none at hand, so he set off again, always in the same direction towards the lower end of the dyke. I did my best to turn him; but a big obstinate pike is very hard-headed, and won't be turned easily, and this resulted in his making another long run, which took him within fifty or sixty yards of the end of the dyke, do all I would. Tom

meanwhile followed me with the big gaff in hand, watching the fight breathlessly ; for to him, as to Peter, there was something more than a mere piking bout in the capture of one of the monsters of the dyke.

Towards the lower end of the dyke, the water, which was about sixty or seventy yards wide at the most, narrowed a good deal and shallowed considerably, there not being more than three feet of water where the stream went out under the road bridge. Thinking he might get me into difficulty in this shallow, I determined to try conclusions and turn him at all risks ; so I put the pot on most powerfully. This seemed only to infuriate him the more, and taking the bit between his teeth, he set off as straight as an arrow for the stream, evidently bent on getting back to the river, out of which no doubt he had strayed. " Why, durn his wig, he's a-goin' under the bridge ! " cried Tom ; " stop a bit ! I'll run round and stop 'n." But Tom was too late ; for before he could get to the bridge the fish was under it, and I after him—for I had to take to the water to avoid being cut. Under the bridge he went, and under I went, doubled up, stumbling and splashing, out at the other side, but still fast in my fish. There was but some sixty yards of stream now to the river, and down the stream, nearly up to my waist, I trundled, when suddenly I heard a boyish voice on the opposite bank exclaim : " Hullo, what a lark ! Here's a mermaid ! I say, Rose, here's a mermaid ! " And the next moment the fish ran into the open river, and I floundered up on to the bank. As I did so I saw a lad in a boat lying in a little creek on the other side of the river, and it

was from him the exclamation of astonishment at my unwonted appearance came. The fish no sooner entered the river than, as if his only object was to go straight ahead, he shot right across it to the opposite bank, under the very boat, and into the little creek at the mouth of which the boat lay. There was a prodigious splash, for the water was shallow there. "Hullo! what's that?" and, snatching up the stretcher, the young gentleman aimed a blow at the fish as he was floundering back into deeper water again; as luck would have it, he happened to catch him on the back of the head and half-stunned him, and before he could recover, a repetition of the dose completed the victory. Just then Tom came running down the bank to him, and between them they managed to haul the fish ashore. The boat was sculled across for me, and I went to see my fish.

"Oh! I say, isn't he a whopper?—as big as me, nearly!" said my young friend; and there lay the fish, certainly the biggest that ever came out of Hartop Dyke. When we did get him to scale, he plumb'd $42\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

"Oh, isn't he just big! and oh, I say, what's your name? What, Hartop! Why, Rose, I say, here's the Master of Ravenswood, as you call him; and this is my cousin Rose, and my name's Fenwick. So's hers!"

I had seen a young lady coming down the bank out of the road, into which there was a gate. She now drew near. I looked up, and my eye was arrested by a jungle-cock plume, set in a cairngorm which I had seen before, and under it was a golden head of rippling

hair, laughing blue eyes, cherry lips, and cheeks suffused with blushes at the revelations conveyed in the brusque remarks of her young cousin.

"Not the first time we have met, Mr. Hartop, I think, though our names were unknown to each other?" said the sweet girl frankly. "But here's papa," as an elderly gentleman came down the bank from the road; "and I am sure he will be pleased to know that the hero of 'that dreadful bear adventure'—as Aunt Chewton persists in calling it to this day—was our near neighbour."

At this juncture Fenwick *père* came up, a jovial old boy, delighted to make my acquaintance; and, being desperately fond of all kinds of sport, he was immensely impressed with the big fish.

"But, bless my soul! why, Mr. Hartop is dripping wet—wet through and through!" And so I was; but in the excitement I had forgotten it.

"Jump into the boat, my dear sir, pray; George will row you down to the Wyke in ten minutes. We will walk down the path, and shan't be long behind. Not a word—you must; you couldn't get home under half an hour, and would catch your death. Go on, in with you! We can give you dry things while your man goes back and fetches your bag. Tom do you go home and tell Peter that Mr. Hartop won't be back to dinner, and ask him to send his clothes along, for, now we have got him, we mean to keep him. What, 'friend?' All right; the more the merrier. Lots of girls—want some beaux—quite a godsend. My compliments to Mr. Hartop's friend—eh, 'Chatteris is his name?' Not the son of *old* Bob Chatteris, of Lin-

coln's-inn ? God bless me, what a coincidence !—boys together ! Welcome as flowers in May or coal at Christmas ! What a day of fortunate accidents, to be sure ! Say dinner at seven o'clock sharp, Tom ; and Tom——” And there was an aside, “Christmas-time, Tom. How's the old woman, Tom ? ” “Hearty.” “That's right.” And I saw Tom convey something that looked like a golden medallion with her gracious Majesty's face thereon, into his fob, with a larger grin than common as he turned away.

“But what are we to do with the fish ? Tom can't carry it. Shall we send it up for you ? ”

“If you will accept it, and care to have it ; ” and I half turned towards the fair Rose.

“But, you know, there's always a sort of a belief or a mystery—a saying—a something about these big Hartop pike,” said the old gentleman, hesitatingly.

“But this is not a Hartop pike, papa. It was landed here, and this is part of Chewton Manor, and, therefore, it is a Chewton pike ; and, as I am to be the Lady of Chewton Manor, I stand up for my rights, and accept the offer, and I'll have it put into a case as big as a watch-box, and Mr. Hartop can come and see it whenever he likes, and when he likes.”

“Chewton pike ! ” I said, thoughtfully ; “what is that I've heard about Chewton pike ? ” Then suddenly I remembered old Peter's prophecy. It was like a revelation ; and, looking up, I saw that she had heard of it, and suddenly remembered it too, and also regarded it as a revelation.

I rowed myself down to the Wyke ; Bob joined

us as soon as he returned, and was made very much of by his sire's old friend; and a glorious evening we had. There was a bunch of mistletoe as big as a gooseberry bush, and even a Druid couldn't complain that any want of proper attention was paid to it. There was present a cousin, a sister of Master George's, to whom Bob paid frightful attention—a skittish, sprightly little witch she was—so that we were well matched. All the good old games were played to distraction, even to forfeits. Laugh!—we shook the roof with laughter; and a pretty conspiracy was got up by Master Bob, that young George, and the cousin. The cousin was blinded, and was crying the forfeits; Bob and George brought in the big fish on a tray for a forfeit, and the usual “What shall the owner of this pretty thing be done to?” was asked. The answer was that “Hartop's Dyke should kiss Fenwick's Wyke o'er the head and tail of a Chewton pike”—at which the company laughed consumedly, though we didn't exactly, the joke was too serious. Well, well, we did it with a laughing chorus, and we laughed ourselves to cover our confusion. The company shrieked, and I thought old Fenwick would have guffawed himself into an apoplexy. It was the first kiss, but, I am bound to say, by no means the last; for I did my best to realise the prophecy by “leading to the hymeneal altar,” as the newspapers say, the heiress of Fenwick and Chewton in about a twelvemonth thereafter. The big pike now grins a welcome to strangers in the great hall of Hartop in a six-foot glass coffin, and under him is writ the prophecy, of course in letters of gold. Rely upon it,

that great reverence is paid to that amazing preparation by every one of the name of Hartop, while Peter—now Mr. Peter, in a silver chain of office—regards him as the totem or great medicine of the Hartops.

